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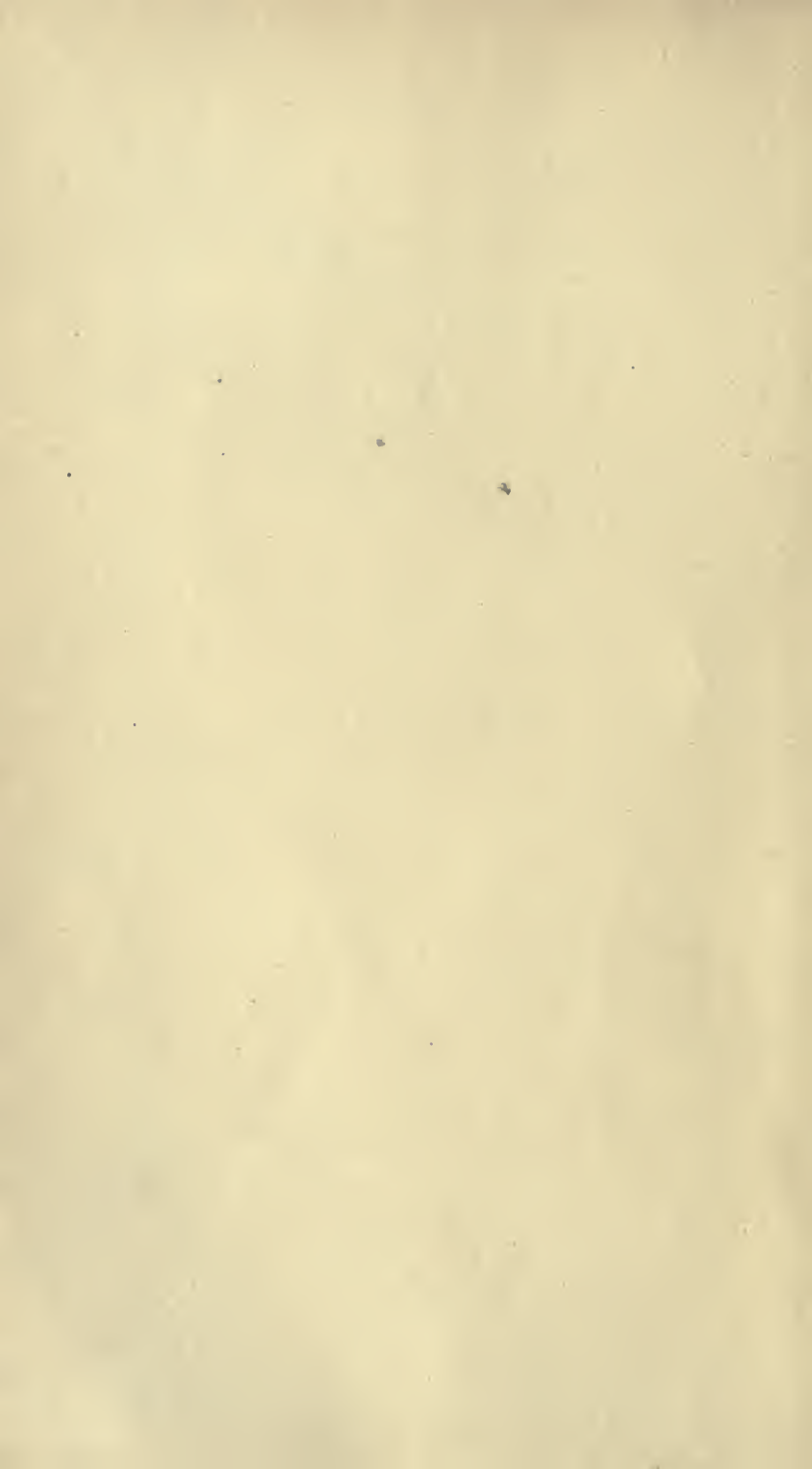
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A SKETCH OF

HERDER AND HIS TIMES.



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HERDER.

A SKETCH OF
HERDER AND HIS TIMES.

BY
HENRY NEVINSON.

“The history of Literature is the great Morgue, where every man seeks his dead, those whom he loves or to whom he is related. When amongst the rows that lie there unnoticed and unmeaning I chance upon a Lessing or a Herder, with faces so human, so sublime—then my heart throbs within me. How can I go past without hurriedly kissing those pale lips?”—HEINE.

“If Herder was not a poet, he was a poem.”—JEAN PAUL.



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1884.

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DEDICATED

IN GRATEFUL REVERENCE TO THE MEMORY OF

THOMAS CARLYLE.

“ I praise the loyalty o’ the scholar—stung by taunt
Of fools, ‘ Does this evince thy Master, they so vaunt ?
Did he then perpetrate the plain abortion here ? ’—
Who cries, ‘ His work am I ! full fraught by him, I clear
His fame from each result of accident and time,
And thus restore his work to its fresh morning-prime :
Not daring touch the mass of marble, fools’ deride,
But putting my idea in plaster by its side,
His, since mine ; I, he made, vindicate who made me ! ’ ”

FIFINE AT THE FAIR.

PREFACE.

I have written this book as a supplementary note to Carlyle's Essays on German Literature, in the hope that it may be helpful to some readers of those Essays, as I think it would have been helpful to me when I first read them many years ago.

I have depended chiefly on the following authorities :—

(1.) *Reminiscences of Herder's life* collected by his widow, Maria Carolina von Herder (*Erinnerungen aus dem Leben Joh. Gottfrieds von Herder*. Tübingen, 1820). These *Reminiscences* were edited by Johann Müller, the historian, and his brother George. Though they are necessarily imperfect and fragmentary, they give the most vivid picture of Herder's life that has yet been made. They are in two small volumes.

(2.) *Herders Lebensbild*. This is a collection by one of Herder's sons of the original authorities for the earlier part of the *Reminiscences*; also of Herder's early unpublished works and correspondence. It is invaluable as far as it goes, but stops abruptly with the return from Strassburg (1771).

(3.) *Aus Herders Nachlass* (three volumes, edited by Düntzer and Ferdinand Gottfried von Herder, 1857): a collection of Herder's correspondence with several of his friends, such as Jean Paul, Lavater, and the rest, also the letters from Goethe. A short and useful account of each friendship's history is prefixed to the several collections. The third volume contains Herder's correspondence with Karoline Flachsland before their marriage.

(4.) *Von und an Herder* (by the same editors, 3 vols. 1861): a similar collection to the last, containing the correspondence with Gleim, Heyne, Nicolai, &c., and the letters from Einsiedel and Knebel.

(5.) *Reise nach Italien* (edited by Düntzer, 1859): the correspondence between Herder and his wife during his visit to Italy.

(6.) *Aus dem Herderschen Hause* (published 1881): an account, by Georg Müller, of his visits to the Herders in Weimar.

(7.) *Knebels Nachlass* (2 vols. 1840): containing the letters from the Herders to Knebel.

(8.) *Hamanns Schriften und Briefe* (4 parts, 1872-4): containing some of Herder's correspondence with Hamann.

(9.) Goethe. *Briefe an Frau von Stein* (1848): useful for the history of Herder's first eight years in Weimar.

(10.) Goethe. *Briefwechsel mit F. H. Jacobi* (1846): especially for the dispute on Spinoza.

(11.) Goethe. *Dichtung und Wahrheit aus meinem Leben* and the *Annalen*.

(12.) In the last chapters I have drawn occasionally from Goethe's *Briefwechsel mit Schiller*.

(13.) *Herder nach seiner Leben* (by Robert Haym, Leipzig, 1877-80). Only the two first parts of this great work, taking us to the departure from Bückeburg for Weimar, had yet appeared when I finished this book. For the history of this earlier period I am greatly indebted to Haym's wonderful thoroughness and unwearied research.

(14.) I have read the so-called *Biographies* of Doering, Neumann, and Ring, but found them to be little more than new arrangements of the *Reminiscences*, with the vitality left out. Ring's is the best of the three.

(15.) In considering Herder's works I have used the edition prepared by his widow, Heyne, and the Müllers (Tubingen, 1805-20), as being on the whole the best, in spite of all faults, and the only edition with much pretence to completeness. Düntzer has been slowly bringing out a very excellent edition, with historical prefaces to the various works, and notes on the text; but it is still far from complete.

The references to Carlyle are from the ordinary small edition, except those from *Frederick*, which are from the large edition in six volumes (1859-65).

Hettner's account of Herder (*Literaturgeschichte des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts*) appears to me both brilliant and sympathetic.

I owe much to my sister's help and counsel.

The portrait is from a crayon-drawing by Bury, now in the possession of Herder's grandson, Geheimerath von Stichling, of Weimar, by whose kind permission I obtained this photograph.

May 3, 1883.

ERRATA.

On page 7, last line of the verse, for *come* read *comes*.

Page 10, line 14, for *Emmerien* read *Emmerich*.

Page 24, line 20, for *Kanter* read *Kant*.

Page 53, line 26, for *Indus* read *Ludus*.

Page 100, for *Möser* read *Moser*.

Page 113, line 23, for *Philocrates* read *Philoctetes*.



HERDER AND HIS TIMES.

CHAPTER I.

“WHENCE.”

“Old-world pairs.”—JAMES LEE’S WIFE.

EARLY in the last century the Protestant inhabitants of Silesia, long a foremost stronghold of the Hussite band, found their treatment at the hands of their neighbours, who were actively encouraged, no doubt, by the Catholic house of Austria, so grievous to be borne, that many of them considered it better to leave their native home, and wander out into other lands, where they could live more conveniently in accordance with their steadfast views of the Gospel and its truth. Amongst these was a man of the name of Herder, of whose origin and previous dwelling-place nothing further can be discovered. He had probably been a small farmer in Silesia; for, after proceeding far up to the north-east from his native place, and raising his Ebenezer, as he would have said, at Mohrunge, a little town in East Prussia, he bought a house and field, and devoted himself henceforth to farming and the Gospel.

In 1701 the son of the Great Elector had been crowned, under the title of Frederick I., at Königsberg,¹ which lies some fifty or sixty miles to the north of Mohrunge and had

¹ Carlyle’s *Frederick*, vol. i. p. 60.

been famous since the Reformation days of Markgraf Albrecht for its university, and as the capital of East Prussia; a province that was safely delivered from the rule of Poland by the Elector John Sigismund of Brandenburg in 1618,¹ though several of the inhabitants of that slowly-changing country still continued to speak in the Polish tongue. It must have been during the reign of this Frederick I., who died in 1713, that the Herder from Silesia settled in Mohrungen, and married one of the daughters of the land, who bore him a son, and they called his name Gottfried. The little town, with its cattle, farms, market-gardens, and yarn- and linen- looms, supporting at that time nearly two thousand souls in all, lies in a flat and sandy region, with a lake of some extent to the south, and to the north a pool, also dignified by the name of lake, but in reality little better than a marshy mill-pond. Beyond a circle of some miles of open ground the sight is bounded by the borders of a forest, that stretches away again to other lakes and swampy flats.

Like most of the towns in this district, Mohrungen owes its existence to the Order of German or Teutonic Knights, who deemed the strip of land between the two lakes a suitable position for one of their outposts against the heathen of eastern Prussia. Accordingly, in 1280, a castle was built and fortified with eight towers, but the hamlet that nestled confidently at its foot was not altogether happy in its protector; for the order waxed fat, and together with the allied King of Poland was utterly defeated at Tannenberg in 1410,² so that Mohrungen for the time fell into the hands of the enemy. Again, rather more than a century later, all the place, except the castle and the Gothic church, with its "horned pinnacles," was burnt to the ground by Sigismund of Poland in his rage against that obstinate Markgraf Albrecht of Brandenburg.³ In 1697 the town was for the second time burnt through some accident, so that when Herder arrived from Silesia the natives would hardly have recovered from their disasters, and land would be at a dis-

¹ Carlyle's *Frederick*, vol. i. p. 323.

² Ibid. vol. i. p. 184.

³ Ibid. vol. i. pp. 244-254.

count, and such houses as had been rebuilt would be looking their newest and brightest—though indeed a traveller tells us that buildings in Mohrungeu soon begin to look dim and mossy, for the damp of the land is great.

The son Gottfried grew up under the eye of this resolute exile, and at first intended to devote his life to the handicraft of cloth-weaving, but, finding it none too profitable, he obtained a post as bellringer or sexton in the Lutheran church, and clerk in the services that were conducted for the benefit of those amongst the townsfolk who could only speak the Polish tongue. He was also appointed master over the girls in the elementary school, a position for, which nature had suited him; for, in spite of a certain sternness and inflexible regularity, he was fond of children, and readily won the confidence and friendship of the little maidens of Mohrungeu. One of them indeed, when she was a grey old woman, used to tell how Gottfried Herder in the days that are gone would bring her cherries from his patch of garden outside the town walls, and even carry her to school in his arms. He seems to have held the school in his own house, for we read that the chatter of the girls was disturbing to any of the family who wished for quiet. In course of time, Gottfried, having now established for himself a certain position in life, cast his eyes upon Anna Elizabeth, daughter of Pels or Pelz, blacksmith and armourer in the town, a cheerful, diligent, and quiet girl, with manners and intellect above her station in life, and therefore well able to assist him in the management of his school. Their marriage rites were duly performed, and their first child was born in September, 1739. She probably died in infancy, for we hear no more of her. The second, Anna Luisse, was born in 1741, and at the age of twenty married a butcher, Neumann, but died after two years' unhappiness. Next came the subject of this story, and after him Caroline Dorothea, born in 1748, and at the age of eighteen married to a baker, Gùlden-horn, a man of little worth, who vexed her righteous soul with his cruelties and immoralities, as will hereafter be seen. The fifth and last child, Carl Gottfried, was born in 1752, and died

when he was three years old. This little register is apparently still to be seen; written down by Gottfried Herder's own hand on the blank leaves of his Arndt's "True Christianity," which served as his family memorandum-book, a little prayer accompanying each entry after the pious fashion of those times. The entry that especially concerns us narrates how that a son was born to them on the 25th of August, 1744, and was duly christened two days after his birth under the name of Johann Gottfried; so early did Herder's connection with the Church begin. By the side of the entry his father, Gottfried, has written the following prayer: "O God, keep this child in thy baptismal covenant, and lead and direct his path through thy Holy Spirit, that we may find him with us all at some future day before the throne of the Lamb, and go in together to the feast of everlasting joy. God, help."

CHAPTER II.

MOHRUNGEN, 1744—1762.

“ One day I will
 “ Accomplish it ! Are they not older still
 “ — Not grown up men and women ? ’Tis beside
 “ Only a dream, and, though I must abide
 “ With dreams now, I may find a thorough vent
 “ For all myself.”

SORDELLO.

SEEING that a child is the result from the combined characters of his parents, and that the first few years of his life are little else than the reflection of their influence, it will be worth while here to try and form some clear picture of Herder’s father and mother, and see what manner of people they were. The warm and imaginative spirit of the Silesian grandfather seems, as so often happens, to have left out one generation, and to have descended rather on the grandson than the son. Herder’s father was a pattern of strict regularity and unflinching industry, doing his daily work in the house, the church, and amongst the little girls in the schoolroom, with earnest cheerfulness, and, for the most part, in silence. His son, in years long after, used to tell of his strictness, and his little delight in words.

“ If my father was pleased with me, his countenance brightened, he laid his hand gently on my head, and called me his *Gottes Friede* (the peace of God); that was my greatest and sweetest reward. Strict and upright in the highest degree he always was, but also good-tempered. I shall never forget his earnest, silent face, and his bald crown.”

His insight, probity, and unwavering love of truth seem to have raised him almost to the position of an oracle among the simple people of Mohrungeu, who consulted him in any difficulty or perplexed crisis of their ordinarily quiet lives, never

failing to receive the comfort of the best counsel so pure a soul could give, either by word of mouth or even in a little treatise on their case. Method may be said to have been the watchword of his life; however healthy his children might be, yet, at certain times of the year, they were obliged to take a powder against a disease that was supposed to afflict the young; in spring, too, they were dosed with blackthorn tea, and in autumn with elder syrup. Of his kindness we have already seen examples. Here, then, was again the stuff which nature ordains shall father a “man of genius,” who is not to lose himself in transient flashes of aimless insanity, but is to continue with set purpose on his way, slowly mastering the most difficult task of all, the recognition of the reality of life.

In outward appearance Herder was very much like his father; but, as might be supposed, he derived his inmost characteristics from his mother, who was a small, thin woman, loving quiet, and inclined to reserve and thoughtful piety, having a touch of true poetry and imagination besides, though hardly enough to be the mother of a poet that should be great for all time. She devoted herself with contented piety to the unambitious duties of her station, the careful management of her little household, the furtherance of her daughter's welfare (devotion too little repaid), assistance when possible in the girls' school, and the relief and comfort of the husband of her youth, whom she survived nine years; for she lived long enough to see her son Gottfried already of mark in the eyes of the German world. The rest of her life was not without its trials, and those grievous: we read that she was seldom free from pain, and for several years almost entirely lost her hearing. This was a sore trouble, for it was ever her greatest pleasure to go to the church, and hear good counsel and listen to the old hymns she loved. Two years before she died, in 1770, a year full of momentous issues for her son, she wrote to him as follows:—

“My dearest Child,—Thou givest me many a wakeful hour; if I wake up and think of thee, sleep takes to itself wings—and yet I can do nothing but entrust thee to the great God. May he give his angels charge over thee, that in their hands they

may bear thee up ! and I have strong trust in Him ; He will not let my petition be in vain ; me and mine hath he promised never to leave nor neglect. As for me, trouble not thyself. The God of ages is and abides my defence. If the Lord only grant me grace that I may go into his house, then I have all ; joy in God remains my greatest happiness. I always sigh when it comes near Sunday, and I pray God that he may grant me the grace to hear his word. Though I can work but little, yet I thank God I can do what I myself require. I entrust all to Him ; my cup of suffering will yet be one day full :

‘He never hath forsaken one
In all his government;
No, what he doth and lets be done
That come to a good end.’

Let the words of Isaiah xliii., 1, 2, 4, be with thee on thy journeying¹ (‘Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name ; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee,’ &c.). May the Lord write these words deep in thy heart.”

The day before her death she solemnly entrusted her Gottfried to the care of God.

We are thus enabled to gain a tolerably clear insight into this modest little household out in marshy Mohrunge a hundred and fifty years ago, and can see that simple, undoubting piety would be the prevailing atmosphere. The house was close to the church, and, when the regular work and vexations of each day were over and done with, the whole family met together and sang an hymn in the hush of the evening ; so that at an early age Gottfried knew by heart not only the words of all the hymns in the old German hymnbook, but all the tunes as well, and a love of Church music, especially of the German *choral*, remained with him all his life. This was a fit training for the man who was to enter so deeply into the spirit of Hebrew poetry.

¹ Herder had then been to France and was travelling in the Rhineland.

From the first he was not as other children are. One who knew him when he was four years old described the future author of the *Ideen* as a fat, rosy-faced boy, creeping about the threshold, always grave and always alone, though other children might be not far off. The writer adds: "I never saw him run, jump, or shout:" which seems a pity, and proved the misfortune of his life. When he was five years old, he was for the first time afflicted with a weakness or fault in the fistula of his eye, that continued to trouble him to the end, though it was indirectly the cause of his life's turning-point—his meeting with Goethe, who, in the very same year, when Herder first felt the pains of his calamity (1749), had struggled into the world a black and hardly breathing infant, far away to the south-west in Frankfurt.

But in spite of the pain of his eye, his gravity and reserve, Gottfried was not to continue creeping about the threshold by himself any longer. His father no doubt supplied the elements of learning, but was unable to proceed further perhaps for want of power, more likely for want of leisure from those girls of his. Gottfried accordingly must be sent to the town school, where those of the Mohrungeu boys, about thirty in number, who were to learn something more than reading and writing, were entrusted to the power of a Rector Grimm, an austere man, with a nature like his name, as German biographers are fond of noticing. In order to form some idea of the condition of average education in Germany at that time, and the extent of the school-reforms for which Herder had to fight so bitterly in later years, we may stop to examine more closely the nature of this man, who laid so many burdens, grievous to be borne, on the hearts of the children in that East-Russian village; and even yet, for good or for evil, this species of schoolmaster is not quite extinct, but recurs at intervals, like the reversions to the zebra-stripes in the horse and its kindred.

Let us picture to ourselves then a man of between sixty and seventy, with a face of deadly pallor, all the more startling in contrast with his large black wig; tall and broad-shouldered, but lame, owing to a disease of the foot, which caused him

much pain, and was in the end his death (in 1767); unmarried, and with a hatred of women so bitter, that the sight of earthenware plates adorned with bright little pictures of ladies in bits of frilling and ribbons drove him into an uncontrollable passion; living a life of utter loneliness, avoiding intercourse with all men as far as possible, though on occasion, it was said, he could display considerable knowledge of the world. Such was the outward character of the man who, having resigned his post in the neighbouring village of Saalfeld on account of frequent complaints against his excessive rigour, appeared before the youth of Mohrungen, in 1752, as the chief apostle to them of Apollo and the Muses. The store of culture which he opened before their eyes consisted in a thorough knowledge of the Latin grammar and of a few inferior Latin authors, a little history and physical geography, a little Greek and less Hebrew, the two last subjects being reserved for the favoured few at the top of the school. His method of imparting this knowledge to the trembling thirty was simple and sufficient. The cane and ruler were always close at hand, for without them he considered school discipline to be beyond the power of mortal man. Whatever had to be learnt was driven into the youthful brain by frequent repetition and bodily distress, nor was the smallest point in the Latin grammar left to itself, till it had become, as it were, part of the boy, to be thenceforth indelible. This process of pressure began at seven o'clock each morning, and lasted till five in the afternoon; and, if Grimm had had his own way, would have continued all night, so great was his zeal. All the while that lessons were being said the boys had to stand; and Herder himself tells us that, in order to increase this feeling of respect, they were obliged to take off their hats whenever they saw Grimm or even his house in the distance, and proceed bare-headed for the rest of the way.

“On the other hand,” continues Herder, “he was glad enough to show his pleasure in the industrious, and distinguished some few of us, of whom I was one, by taking us for walks with him, and then we had to look for speedwell and cowslips to make his tea, which he drank every day. I have

therefore always had a particular regard for these flowers, for they remind me of those walks, the honour and reward of my ever-memorable rector. At times, too, to one or other of the boys, of whom he wished especially to mark his approbation, he would give a cup of this tea in his own study, with one little tiny lump of sugar; this was a most honourable distinction." In return for which distinction we hear that the boy had to kiss the master's hand in the depths of his gratitude.

His severity became a by-word in the village. Even Gottfried, who was one of the poor man's favourite pupils and a pattern-boy to the rest, seems not to have escaped from the terror of the place, for he used to call the grammar of Donatus "the Book of Martyrs," and old Cornelius Nepos "the author of Torment." A boy named Emmerien, who continued Herder's faithful friend, was at that time head of the school, Herder apparently coming second to him, so that these two had full opportunities of winnowing what little grain might lie in the chaff-heaps of Latin grammar, inferior Latin authors, rudimentary attempts on the New Testament and Homer, together with Baumeister's Handbook to Logic and "the complete Dogmatic"; certainly as barren a chaff or rubbish-heap as could well be imagined. And yet in this old rector Grimm something may be discerned which calls for pity, something of the sorrow of baffled strength, if it were worth while to read between the lines. This, at all events, is certain and sufficient, namely, that he, too, had been young once; that his mother probably thought him a genius, and that he still had an ambition which was to prepare youths for the university, even in dingy little Mohrungen, if it were possible, though he had lost his fairer opportunity at Saalfeld.

The impression of such a man on a child like Gottfried, so gentle and sensitive, was strong and lasting, both for good and evil, as will abundantly appear in his future history. Under this rule Gottfried, as his sister tells us, became even more quiet and retiring, and developed such a passion for reading that his father had to forbid him to bring his books to meals, and driven by his hungry mind, little satisfied by the scanty

fare his own house supplied, he would go up and down through the streets of Mohrungeu seeking what he might devour, and whenever he saw a book in a window he would knock at the door and politely ask the owner to be kind enough to lend it to him; then, hugging his treasure, he would hie him away to his father's garden outside the village wall, and climbing a cherry-tree, if it were spring-tide, would sit under the blossom Ariel-wise; an Ariel limited by the laws of gravitation, for one day the bough broke, so that Gottfried might have done himself no small injury; and to prevent this occurring for the future he used to bind himself tight round the body to the central stem of the tree with his leathern book-thongs, and go on with his book, free from the dangers of forgetfulness and rotten timber. He delighted, too, to walk in the free air by the Mohrungeu lake and through the Wood of Paradise, as it was called by the people in the pride of their hearts; and in one of his letters he relates how one autumn day when he was quite a boy he burst into tears on finding Homer's comparison between the vanishing generations of man and the leaves before the wind.

There are many such signs of his early separation from the crowd. His sister says, that one day he pointed out Italy to her on the map with indescribable joy, and cried, "O my Italy! One day I must see thee, too." Here then, as at Frankfort, was a heart longing for the sun and south and the life of the ancient gods. Meanwhile, for the beautiful, he had to content himself with cherry-blossom and lessons on a wretched old harpsichord that was wheeled from room to room to suit the convenience of the several pupils. But, in spite of all hindrances, he gained a complete knowledge of thorough bass and harmony, and his joy in music, especially in the sublime simplicity of church-music, never failed him throughout life. It will be remembered that Herder was six years old when Bach died, and twelve when Mozart was born, and that he was twenty-six, with his views on music and most other things tolerably settled, before the baby that was to be Beethoven uttered his first cry at Bonn.

But the boy's greatest delight was still to wander through

the woods with a translation of a Spanish ballad, or a book of old German fairy stories, and gaze up at the trees with a solemn awe, as at the oaks of Dodona, wondering what the palms might look like in the desert, or the cedars that shade the slopes of Lebanon; for already the spirit of Eastern poetry was upon him, and as he read of Job and Solomon the Mohrungen wilderness blossomed as the rose of Sharon. He never spoke to his companions about his plans and ambitions for the future, but there can be little doubt that all his thoughts were turned to the Church as the field in which he might realise his ideal of life. The Church was at his door; her services, her music, her words of wisdom and folly had sounded in his ears since he had ears to hear; in the church his father held office, though only the small office of summoning the living and burying the dead; the very air that he breathed was ecclesiastic; the words he spoke were cast in Bible phrase; and above all he now received religious instruction and was confirmed by the worthy old pastor Willamovius, generally known as "the pious," whose family were on terms of intimate friendship with the Herders; a humble, peaceful little circle living in contented frugality, the white-haired old pastor distributing alms to the poor of the parish every Sunday after church, and silencing the expostulations of his thrifty wife by his sure and certain hope that the Lord would provide for his own. One of his two sons was eight years older than Herder, and went to Königsberg university when he was quite young; afterwards to St. Petersburg, attaining a certain amount of fame, as a poet of dithyrambs, chiefly on classical subjects, and as a rhymer of fables. The pastor's wife is described as an angel in woman's disguise, and the man himself was so much beloved that his portrait was hung up in the town church, and there seems no doubt that he supplied several features for Herder's ideal of a parson in his early treatise on "God's preacher," though his mildness of temper, that almost became weakness, and his simple but narrow-minded piety, would not have satisfied Herder in later days, whilst his unimaginative dogmatism could have had little attraction for him at any time after childhood. But his memory was always

regarded with tenderness and gratitude, none the less sincere, though pervaded by a gentle humour. In after-years Herder describes how during some lecture or lesson on religion the pious and eloquent old man would always stop when he came to the journey to Calvary, and, hanging (in his own phrase) "mother-naked on the cross," would stand still, lost in a reverie of tranquil enchantment—whilst his audience yawned.

Under such influences as these, therefore, the boy naturally looked to the Church as his future profession in spite of the poverty of his home and his weakness in one eye. But in 1760, when Gottfried was now sixteen, a great and not altogether favourable change was wrought in his young life by the arrival of Sebastian Friedrich Trescho as new deacon or curate in the town church.

Trescho belonged to a class of men whom it is hard to admire, however much they are held up to us as models of morality and godly life, a class that is always common enough amongst northern nations, and commoner in the middle of the last century even than now; poor, melancholy creatures, continually wrapt up in contemplation of their latter end, and analysis of their own righteousness and their enemies' chances of salvation. Trescho was born at Liebstadt, a few miles to the north of Mohrun, and was eleven years older than Herder, whom he seems in the end to have survived about a year. He had been educated at the house of the Pastor Willamovius, and whilst little Gottfried was still creeping over the door-steps, a boy of four years old, he had proceeded to Königsberg, where he acquired a strange mixture of the barren pietistic theology with a taste for higher literature, so that, though he used to write verses of a certain order of worthlessness, and would talk a good deal about the Beautiful and other high subjects, yet he gradually came to the opinion that "the graces of poetry were but a kind of sauce to give religion a relish to the palates of certain people." His object therefore was to promote what was then called edification, by means of the ornaments of culture; and, as his power of production both in the pamphlet and book form was extreme — Hamann used to call him an *animal scribax* — he

seemed in a fair way to carry out his purpose as far as the nature of the case permitted. When at the age of seven-and-twenty he returned to Mohrungen, his first appointment in the Church, he had in hand some so-called ascetic treatises "on Religion, Understanding, and Morals," "the History of my Heart," and especially a notable work called the "Bible of Death," which gradually grew into three volumes of mingled prose and verse, all for the purpose of teaching suffering mankind "the art how to die cheerful and happy." He remained at Mohrungen for the rest of his long life, tolerably contented with his lot, though he had been extremely weakly from a child, suffering from some lung complaint, and, as might be guessed through the titles of his works, from horrible fits of bodily and mental depression. He lived unmarried and alone, with such ascetic thrift and frugality that he always had plenty to give to the poor, and left a considerable sum behind him for their benefit. In later life he became more polemical, and in his "Letters on the newest Theological Literature" ran many a tilt against the new doctrines, which he used to call "the latest thing in Socinianism."

Such was the man under whose influence the boy Herder was now to fall. We must forgive him much, for to him we are indebted for considerable information as to Herder's boyhood;¹ but, at the same time, there is no doubt that the next few years were among the most miserable of Herder's life, entirely owing to this "martyr's cross" Trescho. Coming fresh from learned Königsberg, in all the pride of his new office, his culture, his "graces of poetry," and abundant fertility in book-writing, the poor man, with thoughts bent upon the history of his own precious heart and the art of dying with cheerfulness, took very small account of the simple people in Mohrungen. He even seems to have thought that out of Mohrungen could come no learned thing except himself, and on hearing that this young Gottfried Herder had thoughts of the university and a learned profession, which were even encouraged by old Pastor Willamovius and by Rector Grimm, old-fashioned and rusty too, he hastened

¹ In the *Reminiscences*, from which and the Letters this account of Trescho as well as of Grimm is chiefly derived, much too is due to Haym.

to advise the honest sexton and his wife to allow nothing so hazardous, but to get their son safely apprenticed to some unambitious handicraft. Their poverty and the boy's weak sight naturally pointed the same way, and the thing seemed as good as settled. Meantime, till Gottfried should be old and strong enough to learn his craft, he was to continue his lessons under Rector Grimm, but was to sleep and for the most part live in Trescho's house, where he would be free from the noise of those girls in the paternal schoolroom, and would act as *Famulus*, or general servant and amanuensis, to Trescho; thus enjoying, as Haym puts it, the additional advantage of being the first to read the curate's invaluable works. Trescho's object in making this proposal is plain enough; for Herder had already acquired a thorough knowledge of Latin, could run errands almost as well as most boys, and, above all, wrote a clear and beautiful hand, under which guise that work *On the History of my Heart* would be very presentable to the publisher Kanter over in Königsberg.

Accordingly Gottfried left his loving home-circle, with their evening hymns and regular courses of medicine, for ever, as it turned out, and took up his abode in Trescho's little house, which seems to have been near at hand, and was presided over by Trescho's elderly sister, who showed Herder no little unkindness, regarding him in the light of a mere boot-boy, who could help in the house and fetch the meat from market. He continued to have meals in his own home, though perhaps he had a small allowance given him to buy some sort of breakfast, for we read that out of this he saved enough to supply himself with oil to light his nightly researches in Trescho's library. His outward condition was very wretched; his apparel so woefully mean that even the poor neighbours of Mohrunge were moved to pity; and his tender mother, always rather inclined to despondency, was now quite in despair that her son, of whom she had hoped so much, should come to such a plight. His daily lessons under Grimm still continued, and no doubt had now become rather a relief in comparison, for Grimm, though stern, was at least honest, and was not engaged on a history of his own

heart. Trescho refused to give any aid in his education for fear lest he should offend Grimm by his interference, as he himself puts it, in an elaborate apology for his neglect written after Herder's death, more probably because his own self-conceit blinded him to the boy's merit, and utterly precluded any true sympathy with a fellow-creature, of whatever position.

However, in spite of all appearances, Herder's parents, especially the father, continued to have the greatest confidence in Trescho and his advice—should not a curate of souls, a priest of God, do right?—and it seems possible that at first, even Gottfried himself, through his reverence for his master's office, tried hard to establish a friendly relation to him. Trescho at all events tells us, that one Saturday evening in his confessional-box he found a letter in an unknown hand, setting forth how much moved the writer had been by last Sunday's sermon, how he desired further instruction from the same source, being resolved of the truth of religion, and steadfastly purposing to lead a new life; the writer concluded by asking that an answer might be laid in the same place, which accordingly was done by Trescho, who says that a few days afterwards he traced a strong resemblance between the writing in the mysterious letter and Herder's hand, when he wrote fast, but could never draw from him a single syllable of explanation or gratitude. The story is discredited by the editors of the *Reminiscences*, and is likely enough to have been a myth springing from that brain of morbid, self-conscious vanity; still it is not altogether improbable in itself, and is just the sort of thing a thoughtful youth like Herder, reserved but anxious to be heard, might do in a moment of religious fervour, coloured by sentimental introspection. Certain it is that if he was really the writer he soon found out his mistake, discovering with much bitterness of soul that no amount of ordination and apostolic succession can turn a pedant into a man, and that it is quite possible for a parson to draw on a garb of godliness with the surplice, and also leave it comfortably hanging up in the vestry when service is over.

Under these circumstances it is with no wonder that we read in Trescho's account of this period that to him the youth was

always shy, reserved, and completely shut up in himself, hardly speaking above a whisper, and then only a word or two at a time. Certainly this was not a cheerful sphere of life for a boy of high ideals and ambitions, partly conscious too of his own difference from the rest, though hardly daring to encourage what all around endeavoured to suppress. But in spite of everything he went on his own way step by step as best he could, though with a hope too like despair. By acting as copyist for Trescho he learnt the art of making books, of whatever value that may be, and acquired some degree of Trescho's dangerous facility in speeding off sentence after sentence in prose or verse indifferently, so that, especially in his earliest and latest works, something of Trescho's manner is said to be recognisable.¹

But above all other influences in importance at the time was Trescho's collection of books, "printed and unprinted," as Trescho modestly says, "unprinted" of course being understood of his own productions. In this little library he discovered the authors which continued his favourites for life, for, though he lived to see a greater generation of poets and thinkers arise in Germany than any she had yet produced, their glories could never dull his love for the favourites of his youth, who had first opened his eyes to the beauties of the world and the mysteries of a poet's soul; so that, when in far distant years Trescho wrote offering him the choice of his possessions, he answered, "Send me your old copy of Kleist, the first I ever read." After Kleist, he seems most to have been attracted by Simon Dach, a poet who had been the light of Königsberg and all this East Prussian country rather more than a century before (1605—1659). At this time too he met with Gellert, Uz, Gleim, the *Odes* of Klopstock, the first cantos of the *Messias*, the earliest writings of Lessing, and other signs of the dawn in German literature to be noticed in a following chapter. Trescho's story, that one night he found the boy fast asleep in his little bed with copies of the classics and modern German

¹ So Haym : Trescho's works are unknown to me.

poets heaped up round him, and to his horror a light burning brightly in the midst, is more likely to be true than the myth of the sentimental letter.

After he had been with Trescho rather more than a year, and was now between seventeen and eighteen years old, the redoubtable work on *The History of my Heart* was at last well finished, and had to be sent off to the publisher Kanter at Königsberg. Herder, of course, as the boy of all work, had to see that the treasure was properly directed, sealed up, and despatched. A few days after came a letter from Kanter, no doubt expressing his admiration of the inestimable history of Trescho's heart, and adding that in the same packet he had found an ode purporting to be addressed by an ancient Jew to Cyrus, grandson of Astyages, altogether so full of spirit and emotion that it had been printed at once, and was received with applause by all competent critics. When Trescho charged Herder with having interpolated this poem amongst the pages of *My Heart's History*, the boy did not deny it, but blushed and smiled. This was Herder's first printed work. The ode is really in honour of Peter III., grandson of Peter the Great, and Czar of all the Russias, the husband of the "Wild Cat," Catherine II. At the time this ode was written he had just entered upon his tragic six months of power, for in this very month of January the Empress Elizabeth had died, and Peter III., filled with unbounded enthusiasm for the man who had held the world at bay, now concluded peace, and even active alliance with Prussia, at the same time evacuating East Prussia, which had been occupied by Russian troops for some two or three years past, and had served as the starting-point for that short-lived triumph of the advance on Berlin itself, fifteen months before.¹ Herder's ode was therefore probably intended to celebrate the relief of his own little land from foreign annoyance at the hands of these obstinate fighting-men with their unspeakable tongue, though the editors of the *Reminiscences* are inclined

¹ Oct. 3rd—12th, 1760. Carlyle's *Frederick*, vol. vi. p. 87 ff.

to put its praises in the mouth of some Russian notables released by the new Czar from the dreariness of Siberia.

After such signs as these, it might have been thought even Trescho would have perceived that he was hardly guiding this boy, committed to his charge, towards the paths wherein nature had willed that he should walk. Yet the man was so blinded by a mixture of religious hypochondria and the vanity of self-examination, that he was still absolute for some handicraft, and this though Herder never showed the smallest ability for any practical performance of the sort, in spite of a certain neatness of hand and readiness of body. With no prospect before him but the life of a village butcher or carpenter in remote Mohrungen, and oppressed as he was daily by the savage harshness of the unfruitful Grimm, and the petty tyranny of pious Trescho, the boy, who was to be a name in Germany, might well despair; he longed for death, the "lovely sleep," as he calls it, that would put an end to his miseries; his reserve became deeper, and he acquired that shyness of demeanour and nervous apprehension, which in after-life, in spite of all efforts, he hardly succeeded in conquering. He seems never to have completely forgiven Trescho for his treatment of him during this period, and always speaks of him, especially during the next few years, with a peculiar bitterness of hatred and contempt. His letters to him are in a style of mock civility, and contain no word of thanks; in one of his early pieces of verse he calls him a "pious tiger," and in some later reviews he talks of "the shrieking Trescho," "the great Apostle of Death," "the raven croaking out funereal melodies," "the man who sprinkles the cheeks of youth and the flowering rose with drops of lamb's blood, and builds his dwelling on earth of the cross-bones of Golgotha."¹ In a letter of later date he says, that in Trescho he had learnt to know what a hypocrite meant. Whether a still graver charge may not lie hidden under his comparison between Trescho and Tartuffe may be left to the decision of

¹ Quoted by Haym.

those who have suffered from personal contact with melancholy zealots of this kind.

In addition to all his other trials, the boy lived in perpetual dread lest his last faint hope should be suddenly and for ever cut short by a summons to the war. His name had been entered on the military list of his district, and at any moment he was liable to be called to the barracks, for, though he was weak in sight and small of stature, six years of slaughter had considerably thinned the Prussian muster-roll, the war was not yet over, and if Silesia, and even the existence of Prussia herself, was to be maintained, Father Fritz could not afford to be very particular about the size of the children who died for him.

The remembrance of the sword that at that time hung over his head remained with Herder throughout life, and—if any special reasons are required in the case of an intellectual man—this is sufficient to account for the peculiar horror with which he always regarded things military. He used to maintain that the military constitution as established in several German provinces was barbarous and inhuman, threatening to extirpate morality and planting ignorance and idleness in its place. “Look,” he used to say, “how many honest men have been ruined by it; look how those poor people in Prussia are pressed down in indescribable fear and slavery, so that they dare take no thought for themselves.” The sight of a “red collar” (his name for the Prussian uniform) always filled him with grief and indignation, and he never quite recovered from this early hostility towards the Prussian Government.

But during this winter (1761-2) there was more grey than red to be seen in Mohrungen, for a Prussian regiment on its way back from the campaigns of the Seven Years' War (perhaps from the triumphant field of Kunersdorf itself, where they had shot to death the poet Kleist something more than two years before this), being overtaken by the cold weather in East Prussia, thought it best to find quarters for a time in Mohrungen. The army-surgeon of this regiment was intimate both with Trescho and Herder's parents. It is possible that the

heavily-laden mother raised to this new comer the voice of her complaint. At all events, one day the surgeon—whose name seems to have been Schwarzerloh—though Herder himself was doubtful on this point, only remembering that he was a Swede—asked for a glass of water whilst in Trescho's house, and when Herder had brought it, and duly retired, the surgeon informed Trescho that he intended to take the boy into his service; finding further how thorough was his knowledge of Latin, he promised to take him to Königsberg, and teach him surgery, to have the weakness of his eye cured, and even to give him a good start in the medical profession at St. Petersburg if he wished it, on condition that he should at once translate a medical treatise of his own into Latin, so that it might be read with ease by the whole civilised world from Moscow to Paris.

This offer came to Herder, as he says, like the “day-spring from on high.” As soon as winter was gone, he set to work on botany with the enthusiasm of a new life. It mattered not to him that he had no natural taste whatever for medicine; all he thought of was deliverance from the meanness and slavery of his present position. The gloom of Trescho was blighting his young heart as the darkness of a cave blights a fern; the whole world was turning the colour of lead under the influence of this morbid hypocrite with his “Histories of his Heart” and his “Bibles of Death”; and now there was once more a chance of seeing the fair golden sunshine and breathing the free air. His friends and relations in Mohrungen rejoiced with him, though he was going as a bird from the nest, and gave him all the aid that lay in their simple power. Accordingly in the first beginnings of summer, whilst his favourite blossoms were still on his father's cherry-trees, he set out towards northerly Königsberg with his angel of deliverance (the kindly surgeon seemed no less), and left quiet Mohrungen, its castle, its gothic church, damp little houses, lake, mill-pond, wood of Paradise, his boyhood, his parents, and all who loved him, behind for ever, for he was to see them no more at all again.

CHAPTER III.

KÖNIGSBERG, 1762—1764.

Königsberg, Prussia Improper (so styled because there's a sort of bleak, hungry sun there).—PIPPA PASSES.

“ Shall I still sit beside
 Their dry wells, with a white lip and filmed eye,
 While in the distance heaven is blue above
 Mountains where sleep the unsunned tarns ? ”

PARACELSUS.

THE journey from Mohrungen to Königsberg seems to have taken some four days for the post-waggon ; we may suppose, therefore, that for a regiment on march it would take rather more ; and it is probable that Herder and his surgeon went with the whole regiment, for Königsberg was still in Russian possession for the next few months. Indeed, it seems to have been a matter of indifference to the inhabitants in those days whether they owed allegiance to Brandenburg, St. Petersburg, or Warsaw. For, though the “ expensive Herr,” with his diamond buttons, had been crowned here some sixty years before, as Friedrich, the first King of Prussia,¹ and though Königsberg owed her famous university to that great Markgraf Albrecht, of whom we have spoken above ; yet, through her trade, she was inspired with that beautiful spirit of independence and cosmopolitan toleration which welcomes all men as brothers, provided they pay.

The town has taken her seat on the Pregel, partly on a large island formed by the river, partly on piles actually driven into its bed. About four miles further to the west the river enters

¹ Carlyle's *Frederick*, vol. i. p. 60, already referred to.

the broad lagoon of the Frische Haff, and the real port of the town stands on a spit of land running into the open sea, about twenty-five miles away. The town owed her prosperity to ready communication with the interior of East Prussia and Poland, by means of the Pregel and a system of canals, down which various merchandise, especially of corn and oil-cake, could glide quietly into the Baltic, and so across the bridge of the sea to England in the west or northwards to Sweden. At that time Königsberg supported about 50,000 inhabitants, besides the garrison and foreigners; and it is no wonder that to Herder, coming from peaceful Mohrunen, the streets of this "little world," as he called it, with its churches, colleges, warehouses, harbour, squares, and gardens, seemed nothing short of marvellous, and remained fresh in his memory, as on that first day. The trade of the town gave both variety and reality to the life of its citizens, whilst its remoteness, which was much deplored by the university, really only served to foster its independence and save it from the crackle and glitter of thought in Berlin, and from the learned follies of Leipsig.

On arrival, the surgeon lost no time in introducing Herder to his new profession; he took him to see a dissection at one of the hospitals, and no doubt this hero of the Seven Years' War was surprised and annoyed when his young charge, instead of being absorbed in interest at the performance, fainted away. This of course is no uncommon thing in the early stages of the medical profession; and it is possible that the biographers have made too much of the point as a proof of Herder's extraordinarily delicate and sensitive nature—one of them even exclaiming, in grandiloquent style, "Herder and Schiller both wished to become doctors; but God spake: mankind had deeper wounds to be healed, and both became—poets."¹ Yet it must be remembered that all his life long Herder could never even hear of a surgical operation without the same feeling of faintness. But what was to be done now? Return to Mohrunen—where

¹ Neumann's *Biographie*.

Trescho would be waiting with his "I told you so"; and no second deliverance was to be hoped for—this was impossible. To offend the kindly surgeon, who for the cure of his eye had introduced him to Hamann, a clever doctor and father of a more noteworthy son—this was hard; but, as the case was urgent, it had to be risked. Yet Herder seems to have hesitated for some time, though it is probable that he attended no more dissections.

The history of the next few months of his life is obscure, for the letters from which it is derived were written more than forty years after this, by persons who naturally took no interest in the youth at this time, and in most cases were not aware of his existence. Accordingly, even when they tell us anything, they are generally full of contradictions. It at least seems certain, however, that through the Hamanns he was introduced to the bookseller Kanter, who would remember that poem to Cyrus, so much admired in literary circles some months ago. Kanter's shop was a kind of centre or meeting-place for the learned of Königsberg, answering in some respects to coffee-houses in London at the same time. Kanter himself actually lived in this house at one period, though, perhaps, not till after Herder had left Königsberg. It is possible that Herder for a short time had some thoughts of apprenticing himself to Kanter, and following bookselling as a trade preferable to surgery or oblivion in Mohrunen.

With such thoughts as these in his head, and something under ten shillings of ready money left in his pocket, he was wandering disconsolate through the streets one August day, when he met with his old friend and school rival Emmerich, at that time a candidate for ordination, afterwards organist or clerk at Tragheim. Herder's situation was soon explained, and Emmerich's advice to enter himself on the books of the university, though this would only leave him a few pence to live upon, was so unhesitating, and fitted so well with Herder's own wish, that the two set off together at once to the proper authorities. We read that the dean of the faculty of philosophy,

who was an ill-tempered man, and happened to be starting for a walk, too, at the time, was far from polite in his reception of this queer-looking figure, with his provincial apparel, and even remarked that, judging from appearances, the examination would not be much good. However, the dean of theology was more considerate, and was surprised at the youth's learning, so that, on August 10, Herder, as a *præstantissimus juvenis*, was "initiated to the sacred rites of the muses," as is set forth in his matriculation paper with all the superlatives of a university document.

Herder at once announced this important step to the surgeon, who was of course vexed that his pains should be wasted, and compared the miserable condition of a Prussian parson with the glorious career that was open to a physician in St. Petersburg. But the treatise on medicine had been already duly translated into Herder's best Latin, and further representations were vain. The surgeon disappears northwards now, and Herder saw him no more, though he always spoke of him with gratitude. When the news was received in Mohrungen, Trescho, as might have been expected, was very indignant and wise on the subject, shaking his head in the gravity of his apprehension, and muttering that the boy had deceived them; that he had only used the surgeon's proposals as a pretence to get safe off to Königsberg and enter himself at the university. It is characteristic of the man, that he could never free himself from this idea, but continued to charge the boy with deliberate deceit to his life's end, in spite of Herder's fame and reputation. But the heart of the mother rejoiced with pious joy, and the father contented himself with noting the date in Arndt's *True Christianity*, adding a prayer to "the God who bringeth to light the things of darkness."

In Herder's letter home he had told his parents that he would not ask them for a shilling towards the expenses of his academical life, and he continued for the future to be quite independent of them. A small sum was collected for him amongst friends in Mohrungen, even Trescho contributing his

share; for the rest he had to depend on his own exertions in Königsberg; and during the next six months at least his struggle was no doubt severe. But we know nothing certain of this period, except that at a later time Herder used to tell his children how in those days he could often get nothing to eat but a roll or two of bread. Yet he felt himself to be at length on the right road, and his heart was full of an inward peace that could defy even hunger.

Kanter the bookseller was very kind in allowing him free use of all his books, bound or unbound, and of his shop, where Herder would sit all day long, the world forgetting in the new world that was open to him. To his trade of bookselling Kanter had joined the management of the town lottery, and the editing of the *Königsberg Journal*, to which during the whole of his life in Königsberg Herder seems to have contributed occasional verses and short reviews. Through Kanter, too, he probably first made personal acquaintance with Kant, who in spite of his own poverty at this time invited him to attend all his lectures free of charge. According to one authority Herder was allowed to supplement his education under Rector Grimm by a course of free instruction at the great Friedrich's-College, where Kant himself had been educated, but, as he had already passed his examination for the university, this seems improbable. It is also said that he was for a time appointed to teach arithmetic in one of the elementary schools attached to the college, which is in itself likely enough, for we have seen him helping his father in the girls' school over in Mohrunen. One thing at least is certain, that by this means or that he contrived to keep his body alive from August 1762 till the following Easter, when he gained a firm footing as master in the Friedrich's-College, together with some small exhibition or allowance expressly founded for the benefit of Mohrunen youths studying theology. At the same time, or perhaps rather earlier, through Hamann's influence, he was appointed an overseer or guardian in the boarding-house attached to the college, which was so notable throughout the land for its piety and learning, that many rich

Poles and Russians, with the dwellers in Courland and Lithuania, sent their sons thither to live in the boarding-house two by two, each pair watched over by a special official, who in return for lodging, fire, and candles was required to see that their out-of-school work was not at random, and to pray with them morning and evening. The overseers had further opportunities of increasing their income by giving private lessons. Thus at the age of nineteen we find Herder free from the hardest pinch of poverty, and, though he was never rich, he never had much to suffer from poverty again. Yet it may be doubted whether he surrendered without a pang those days of complete liberty, when he could say in verse: "A gymnosoph, how little do I need! Pomp, winter, rain, see now! my coat defies you all, and earthly glory too; and I am rich as any poet, and academically free. Only my belly do I serve; for it I think, for it I am—else free as air." In the shifts of hopeful poverty there is always this fascination, unknowable in the limited routine of wealth.

Friedrich's-College or the *Collegium Fridericianum*, as it was always called, owed its origin to the great Pietistic movement at the beginning of the last century, and had received special privileges as a royal school from Friedrich Wilhelm I. who favoured the Pietists on account of their morality and their opposition to the supposed fatalist doctrines of Wolff. When Herder was appointed as one of the teachers, the college was still under the direction of the famous Franz Albrecht Schultz, Kant's friend, who, coming from Halle, tried to unite the zeal of Pietism with the wisdom of the Wolfian school. Within the next two or three months he was succeeded by Prof. Arnoldt as director, whilst the real management of the college fell into the hands of two inspectors, Schiffert and Domsien, apparently old-fashioned Pietists of the narrowest type of pedantry. Herder, who already felt within him the beginning of a new period in German life, education, and religion, no doubt found some difficulty in keeping on good terms with these worthy gentlemen, but, except for various vague murmurings of the Pious against this new teaching, and apprehensive suggestions from the pedants that this

man's faith in the Latin grammar was not above suspicion, we hear of no actual rupture; only one day Inspector Domsien observed that the dignity of a teacher in the great Collegium Fridericianum required the use of a wig, at least during school-hours, and was met by Herder's simple remark, that for his part he found his own hair cheaper.

During the first year he taught the third class in Greek, French, Hebrew, and mathematics, and in 1764 he was entrusted with the Latin and poetry of the second class, and the history and philosophy of the first. Such a high position for so young a man was unexampled, and no doubt there were envious tongues ever ready to carp; but by his ready sympathy with his pupils, by the life that he breathed into the dry bones of learning and religion, and above all by his unflinching industry, he abundantly proved that this confidence had not been misplaced. His lectures on the *Bucolics* of Virgil are described as full of charm, no doubt owing to his knowledge of the country, and, when it was his turn to catechise in the college-chapel on Sunday, the place would be full of listeners actually eager to hear. He himself felt too that he was gaining much at the same time, especially in clearness of conception and freedom from misty generalities. In after-life, when he was at work on the philosophy of history, he often regretted that he could not give lectures on the subject to a class of university students; and this inherited desire to impart knowledge remained strong in him to the end, for better and worse. We must remember that he was inspired and cheered by the sweet joy of rebellion against a barren and pernicious system. There still remains a short address, probably belonging to this period, in which he exposes and ridicules the stupidity of becoming learned in the dead languages to the neglect of one's own, the folly of training up mere cringing imitators of Horace and Virgil and crowning Latin as the queen of languages. With such sentiments as these, which were little short of blasphemous then, though commonplace now, it is no wonder that he was more popular with his pupils than with his colleagues and the worthy inspectors, nor

that, being young and having plenty to fight against, he enjoyed his experience as schoolmaster in Königsberg to the full.

Meantime he was diligently attending the university lectures. He went to Lilienthal for "dogmatic," to Kant for logic, metaphysics, moral philosophy, mathematics, and physical geography, and to others for philology, ecclesiastical history, and physics. Here was a wide enough door into knowledge of all sorts open to him, and he was not slow to enter; one of his friends tells us that even in those days he was a "walking dictionary," and his carefully compiled and tabulated note-books are sufficient evidence of his industry. Even before he had left Mohrungeu he had begun to draw up abstracts of important books and sketches for future treatises, many of which came to be fully elaborated in after-years, and through all his life he continued the same practice.

In September 1763 he heard that his father had died at his post in Mohrungeu, and the family was left in extreme poverty. For the present he could do no more than give up to his mother the bit of heritage that had fallen to him. Next year Trescho paid him a visit, and was surprised at the change that had come over the young man once so shy and reserved. The awkward boy had become refined and even courtly in manner. In Trescho's own words "He who once was frightened at the sight of a man with a collar on, could now look without flinching on an order with a star, or on a diadem, just as in the golden age a lamb would play with a lion." He was surrounded, too, by admirers and flatterers, which to Trescho, at least, seemed a very dangerous position. We may think of Herder, therefore, as very popular in the society, especially the learned society, of democratic Königsberg. In the spring of 1764 the bookseller Kanter's youngest sister, a girl of nineteen, having died, Herder was requested to pronounce the funeral oration, which was printed and admired, remaining a strange mixture of old-fashioned rhetoric, eastern imagery, and commonplace sentiment, yet on the whole a promising production for a

man of twenty.¹ We read that in all his speech and writing at this time there was something of *Schwärmerei* or sentimental enthusiasm tending to fall into the sickly, but it must not be forgotten how great a part this selfsame *Schwärmerei* had to play in the new birth of life and literature throughout Europe, here in England as elsewhere. In the middle of the last century a true prophet might have said of the times what Kant in these Königsberg days said of Herder himself: "When once this frothy genius has got over the period of fermentation he will become a valuable man with those great talents of his."

In Herder's case the fermentation was restricted to the region of thought, for in life, in spite of his popularity, he still continued to be what is commonly called a "quiet man." With his learning and teaching, his studies in Kanter's shop, and the morning and evening prayer with the two boarders under his charge, he was too busy to take part in the joys and sorrows of the ordinary German student, even if his desire had set that way. But he turned with a shudder of loathing from the least approach to coarseness, thereby losing much of the humour of life, and owing to his exclusive attention to things of the intellect he never fully acquired that large tolerance in practical life which enables a man to live in the midst of startling contradictions with patience and even quiet amusement. Yet he was far from being a recluse; his heart was warm with desire for love and friendship, and though he seems to have been inclined to play the superior amongst his equals in age, probably owing to his position as schoolmaster, yet he gathered round him a small circle of tolerably clever young men, who regarded him with admiration that seemed to be sincere. In most instances these friendships came to an end as soon as the university days were over, as such friendships do, either from change of thought, change of life, or mere absence; but the remembrance of them remained with him as a pleasant thought all his life,

¹ Printed in the *Reminiscences*.

and it is to the survivors of this circle, who had long ceased all intercourse with the central figure, that we owe our knowledge of Herder during this period.

The man elected by him out of the many to be the friend on whom to sharpen his face, the daily companion to whom all dreams of the future, all growths of thought, all poetic endeavours might be entrusted with safety in full assurance of perfect sympathy, was Kurella, afterwards councillor of war in Königsberg. He seems to have been an honest and affectionate man, sincerely grieved that this sunny friendship could not be eternal but had to end after two short years, because their paths of life diverged, perhaps, too, because he was more limited in brain than in affection, and Herder had already sucked what advantage he could from him. His account, written in 1805, is so vivid that it is worth while even to quote parts of it as they stand.

The immortal Herder was in every way my most heartily-loved bosom friend. All the time that he taught 'in the Collegium Fridericianum we were together nearly every day, and our society became quite a necessity. A man of his intellect, nourished and matured by intercourse with the old classics and the best German writers—a man of the clearest head, the happiest temperament, and a beautiful sympathetic heart—full of glowing imagination which did not degenerate into *Schwärmerei*—full of the noblest ideas and as it were made for friendship, such a man could not fail to enchain a youth who fully harmonized with his mode of thought and hung on him *con corde* and *con amore*. The hours we spent together were the happiest in my life. We generally conversed on literature and the critical journals then in circulation, which I borrowed from a friend of my family, the late lottery-director, the bookseller Kanter. Over a cup of tea, which was kindly given me by a few well-to-do friends, merchants' sons studying with us, and which I always saved for my Herder, we were merrier than many an empty-head over his bottle of Tokay. His society contributed much to my education, for he was even then a walking dictionary. The world was not with us; we were all in all to each other, and happy when the hour struck that brought us together; in autumn and winter this was generally five o'clock in the afternoon. Also we were always alone together, for I would not let any one listen to my Herder—but myself; his sweet voice quite carried one away and his great soul embraced the universe. This happy intercourse, as though we dwelt in

higher spheres, lasted nearly two years, after which we separated. I found Herder always equable, always cheerful, and ready with his sympathy, and always strictly moral. If at times my good spirits became wanton, he joined in my laughter it is true, but at the same time he was able by the most delicate tact to bring them within limits again.

Here, truly, was a friendship "as in the higher spheres," bright as a rainbow, and as soon to fade. The picture is complete: the scantily furnished room, the tea carefully hoarded, the youthful enthusiasm, the eager conversation, soul pouring into soul, and Kurella listening devoutly to this growing Titan; the woe of parting as if the heart-strings would crack, the speedy recovery, the gradual oblivion; certainly man's nature changes but little from century to century.

Another friend, though not so intimate, was Bock, who afterwards also became a councillor of war in Königsberg, and wrote a translation of Virgil's *Georgics*, at one time much admired. He made Herder's acquaintance at Kant's lectures, where they sat at the same table, together with another, named Wilpert, who in his turn has supplied us with some little information. Herder would, as far as possible, take down every word of the great teacher, and, when he had carefully put his notes into correct form at home, the friends would retire to an arbour in an unfrequented public garden, known as the Old Horse-paddock, and seriously discuss the subject of the lecture. Bock was older than Herder, or at least more advanced in the knowledge of contemporary literature, for he seems to have first introduced to his notice the great critical journals that were beginning to move over the face of the German chaos. Herder always remembered him with gratitude, and more than twenty years after this he writes to him, "I can see you still in the flesh, sitting at the same table before me. Where are the old days?"

Fischer, too, was gone, "the chameleon," as he used to call himself, the life of the party as we may imagine, with his reverential love and that delicate though full-flowing humour, from which Herder himself might well have borrowed something. He became chaplain to a hospital and died comparatively young;

all that is left of him being three letters to his friend, two belonging to this time, the third sent to Riga the next year after Herder's little flock had been left desolate, with nothing but the relics of old memories to feed upon. When Herder left Königsberg Fischer's grief knew no bounds, and he could only console himself by reading Rousseau and talking over the old times with Haberkant, another of this friendly circle of whom we know nothing further. Hartknoch, who had come to Königsberg to study theology, but had changed his mind and was learning the art of bookselling and publishing under Kanter, continued of importance in Herder's life for a long time to come.

But far above all other influences, both for this period and for his whole future, stands Herder's connection with the two greatest minds that Königsberg has produced—Hamann and Kant; we must therefore try to estimate the effect of intercourse with them during these years.

In Hamann we are brought face to face with one of the strangest and least comprehensible figures in German, or indeed European, literature: a man who has been alternately worshipped as a prophet of God and derided as a hysterical maniac; a St. John with a broad sense of humour; a woodland satyr prostrate before the cross. His first pamphlet was received with great comfort by the Pietists, because it was a bitter attack on the *Aufklärerei*, or Illumination, of the Berlin and French school. The second part rather shook their faith; and when a collection of treatises came out under the title of "Crusades of a Philologist," with a frightful head of a horned Pan in front and a picture of a large cock solemnly beating time to some church-music for the benefit of two chickens, who lift up beaks of praise in front, whilst a worthy citizen and his wife look on with some astonishment from a pew in the background, it is no wonder that, as Goethe tells us, the hearts of the pious were alienated from him.¹ Still he continued to have a select following of what might be called mystic Christians, such as was Moser, who, living in

¹ *Aus meinem Leben*, book xii.

southerly Darmstadt, gave him the title of the Magus, or Wise Man from the North, by which he was afterwards known. Even within these last few years there has been a strong effort in Germany to re-establish his doctrines as a revelation of no merely temporary value.¹ An Englishman might gain some idea of his influence on German thought by comparing him with Coleridge, whom he sufficiently resembled in life and method. Leaving out of sight the poetry of Coleridge's earlier years, we see in both men the same startling contradictions between teaching and practice, the same unaccountable whims, at times the same weakness of will, though in old age at all events Hamann was far the more stable of the two; the thirst after knowledge, the power of dissertation, the irresistible attraction for the young, the far-seeing criticism, the mystic Platonism (Hamann used to boast that he could have written more than half Plato though he had never read it), the "theosophic moonshine,"—all this is much the same. But in Hamann we are perplexed at long intervals by coming, as it were, upon a distant savour of Swift in the rare atmosphere of Coleridge.² He boasted himself a Socrates in his generation, and a Socrates is never really far removed from Aristophanes in spirit. Endued with all the apostolic fervour of St. Paul, he made a concubine of his father's nurse. He was a bundle of contradictions, full of the unexpected. Loving leisure and even idleness with a passion, he worked for years at mean and irksome employments to support a sick father and a melancholy brother almost brutal with hypochondria.

Educated in Königsberg, he had proceeded to Courland and Livonia as hofmeister in two noblemen's houses. Finding the position insupportable, he tried to learn a merchant's business at Riga with a friend named Berens. In his service he had undertaken a mission to London, but, falling into bad company of both sexes, he grievously failed in the business, found himself in debt, and from the depths of his despair turned to the Bible of

¹ Especially in Disselhoff's *Wegweiser zu Hamann*, a very Christian book.

² And yet even Coleridge was not quite free of it. See Appendix I.

his childhood. This was in 1756, and it would have been interesting if he had met Swedenborg, who must have been in London at the time, bringing out his works on *Heaven and Hell*, *The New Jerusalem*, and so on, "the result of thirteen years' familiar intercourse with the angels." At all events, he undoubtedly read Swedenborg—what in fact did he not read?—and after his visit to London his whole tone of mind changed. For though he himself confessed his thoughts were passing whims, and though Thomas Abbt compared his brain to the archipelago, where one must take ship to cross from land to land, yet the islands were a continent once, and we can still trace connecting links that prove their common origin, the chief being faith in the Bible as something beyond a mere understanding; a second, the inner meaning and unity of nature; and perhaps a third, the importance of popular poetry and language.

On his return to Riga the change was soon apparent. Berens could forgive his mistakes in business and his extravagance, but could by no means forgive this new religious enthusiasm that threatened to perplex the comfortable and enlightened Deism suitable for a prosperous merchant, who enthroned God in heaven, and was ready to honour Him there, provided He let business alone. Still less could Hamann be forgiven when he ventured to look upon the sister, Katharina Berens, as his ideal of all that is divine in woman, or, as he himself says, "a lady with the charm of a Sevigné and the worth of a Maintenon."¹ As things became more and more uncomfortable, he suddenly started for home in Königsberg, where his father was sick. Berens followed in all haste, and, finding his friend spending all his time in what seemed to him profitless religious and philosophic speculations, combined with the activity which the Germans call "book-swallowing," he induced Kant to help him in urging a return to practical life. Poor Hamann, who had just discovered the delights of leisure, replied by a pamphlet,

¹ His little essay on church music, forming one of the *Crusades*, and containing the picture of the musical French cock, was addressed to her under this title.

called *Memorabilia of Socrates for the Tedium of the Public*, compiled by a *Lover of Tedium*; with a double dedication to the renowned *Nobody* and to *Two*, meaning by the *Two*, of course, Berens and Kant. The “renowned *Nobody*” is the unknown mass of the public. Socrates, with his reverential love for the popular religion and his firm faith in his attendant genius or conscience, stands for Hamann himself, contrasted with the enlightened of Berlin, who correspond to the subtle sophists of Athens.

Having thus freed himself of Berens, he devoted his whole time to the study especially of Shakespeare, Homer, the Bible, and the Koran in their original tongues. In 1763 the burden of his brother fell upon him, and he was obliged to undertake the duties of copyist and translator in a civil service department. About this time, too, he went to Frankfort on the invitation of Karl v. Moser, and narrowly missed seeing the boy Goethe; but, finding that Moser had been obliged to go to Holland, he returned with characteristic impetuosity to Königsberg, where, in 1764, Kanter offered him a place on the staff, or even the management, of the *Königsberg Journal*, a post for which he was about as unfitted as nature and art could have made him; and he was afterwards appointed to the excise department. He seems not to have become intimate with Herder till the March of this year, though there is no reason to doubt the story that his father had been entrusted with the cure of Herder's eye, and had failed two years before. He was fourteen years older than Herder, and was probably not attracted at first by the quiet country boy. But now, at all events, the friendship became firm and fast, lasting, with but few interruptions, till the end of his life, and of inestimable advantage to Herder, whom Hamann regarded as the flower of his life-work. “This Socrates,” says Herder in one of his earliest writings,¹ “should have an Aspasia and Alcibiades, and then an Aristotle to gather up his teaching into a system.” Anna Regina, the above-men-

¹ The *Fragments*.

tioned nurse, with whom Hamann lived for about twenty years in semi-connubial bliss, could not become an Aspasia, being occupied with household cares of four children, but Herder did his best to act as his Alcibiades; and, if we must follow out the parallel, Goethe must be content for this occasion to play the Aristotle. After long oppression and grievous straits of fortune Hamann was relieved by death of his two burdens, and at length received from an admirer a considerable present or pension, which enabled him to spend his last year or two in comparative calm. In spite of his passionate nature, his life was singularly pure; though to the end, in his most ethereal speculations, he never lost sight of that side of man's nature which is the broadest bond of kinship and humour throughout all humanity.

It would be impossible to give a complete picture of such a man except in a separate biography, nor has this been satisfactorily done yet. Under the figure of Pan, the great riddle of the universe, he signified himself; and he evidently had no ambition to become a popular writer, for his style is always of the roughest, often incomprehensible, interspersed too with quotations from every literature from Hebrew to French, generally in the original. On the titles of his pamphlets, of which we have seen some instances, he laid great stress. Probably the most suggestive of them all is *Æsthetica in Nuce*, a *Rhapsody in Kabalistic Prose*, followed by a Hebrew quotation from the *Book of Judgment*. Indeed neither Montaigne nor the author of the *Anatomy of Melancholy* can rival Hamann in powers of quotation, for to the wildest imagination he joined the memory of a recording angel, a sufficiently rare admixture. When he is at his best, it is hard to decide whether to compare him to Isaiah, Jean Paul, or the author of the *Sartor*. Exclamations and epigrams succeed each other in bewildering confusion. In his own words, he takes his fan in his hand to winnow the threshing-floor of literature, and in the consequent dust of disturbance it cannot at first be seen whether there was enough grain to make it worth the threshing. Yet,

if we watch, after a time the grain becomes clearer, the heap larger—but the thresher has supplied most of it himself. In the middle of the eighteenth century it is strange and cheering to come upon such sentences as these: “Poetry is the mother-tongue of man;” “The senses and passions speak and understand nothing but pictures;” “The first garment of man was a rhapsody of fig-leaves;” “Speech is translation from the tongue of angels into the tongue of man, from thoughts to words, from things to names, from pictures to signs;” or again, “Your philosophy of murderous lies hath cleared Nature out of the way, and why do ye require of us that we imitate Nature? That ye may be able to renew your pleasure, becoming also the murderers of Nature’s nurslings.”

All his tracts and rhapsodies were written, it is true, to serve a particular occasion, generally to confute some doctrine advanced in Berlin or Leipsig; and this, as Goethe says, gives them an additional interest, if one can but find the key. Yet they are all cast in a universal form and based on would-be universal principles, for it is his main doctrine that nothing separate or partial is of any value, but that every production should spring from the union of the producer’s whole powers: a principle, again to quote Goethe, that is noble but hard to follow, especially where the object is not life or poetry, but branches of literature that necessarily imply separation and distinction of parts.¹ Hence it is that though Hamann is far from void he is without form. We wander through his pages as through a German forest, full of obscure caves and dim vista, rough with surprising rocks and tangled branches; yet, after the glaring plain of the encyclopædists and the barren desert of scholiast abstractions, the shade is pleasant and the mystery has its charm.

Soon after his friendship with Herder was established, Hamann began to instruct him in English, and characteristically set him to work at once upon *Hamlet*, the consummation of the

¹ *Aus meinen Leben*, book xii.

English speech. Then followed *Paradise Lost*, and the other great examples of our olden time, attended, as we may imagine, by discourses from Hamann, Herder eagerly drinking in his words as he told how real a thing poetry must be, how different from learning; springing from the heart of a people, based on the universal passions of mankind, whose soul throughout the world is much the same; in religion, too, he would be told, there are spheres where only faith can be the guide, for understanding cannot enter; there are depths of thought which all the enlightenment of Bayle, Diderot, Voltaire, Nicolai, and the rest of the clear-as-daylight school, cannot illumine. Such seed thrown on a brain like Herder's was likely to bear fruit, which in the work of his lifetime was apparent to all men. The first signs of it appeared in the shape of some poems chiefly on religious subjects, and a review of the so-called *Dithyrambs* of Willamov, son of old pastor Willamov, in Mohrungen, written for the *Königsberg Journal*, over which Hamann presided.

The friendship between Hamann and Kant still held, though the bonds were growing weaker, so completely opposed were their modes of thought; for they stood like archers shooting at the same high mark from opposite sides of a hill, hardly willing to believe that the mark was the same. Yet the rapid development of Herder's friendship with Hamann must have increased his intimacy with Kant, for about this time Kant, in spite of his forty years, is said, though it seems impossible, to have begun to consult the youth of twenty on the subject of his lectures, and even to have submitted the drafts of some treatises to his approval or correction. From the first Kant had been well inclined towards the friendless boy. He himself had been private tutor in Arensdorf, only a few miles from Mohrungen, some sixteen years before, and we have seen that he allowed Herder to attend all his lectures free of charge; though during all this period, indeed for the fifteen years 1755-70, Kant held no official position in the university, but was merely a *privat-docent* giving lectures in his own house to such as would come and would pay the fee. His poverty was great, and, to a man with

Kant's horror of dependence and debt, particularly oppressive ; but his generosity was rewarded by the delight and enthusiasm of his young listener. Herder has left us a brilliant account of the great philosopher's appearance and manner at this time ; and, though it has been quoted again and again in German, and even in English, it will bear repetition.

Once, he begins, I enjoyed the happiness of knowing a philosopher, who was my teacher. In the prime of life he had the joyous cheerfulness of youth. His open forehead, built for the home of thought, was the seat of unfailing merriment and joy ; speech of the richest thought flowed from his lips ; irony, wit, and humour were ready at his call, and his method of instruction was the most entertaining intercourse. With just the same spirit in which he examined Leibnitz, Wolff, Baumgarten, Crusius, and Hume, or followed out the physical laws of Kepler and Newton, he would turn to the writings of Rousseau that were then coming out, his *Emile* and *Heloïse*, as well as every natural discovery which came to his ears, would test their worth, and always return to the unrestrained knowledge of Nature and the moral worth of Man. The history of men and nations, natural philosophy, mathematics, and experience, were the sources by which he gave life to his lectures and conversation ; nothing that was worth knowing was indifferent to him ; no clique, no sect, no personal advantage nor ambition had the slightest charm for him against the further extension and explanation of truth. He cheered us on, and urged us pleasantly to think for ourselves ; despotism had no place in his thoughts. This man, whom I name with the greatest gratitude and respect, was Immanuel Kant.¹

It must be remembered that this description was written many years after, when the enthusiasm of youth had given place to direct antagonism. We may imagine, therefore, how strong the influence was at a time when Herder was ready to welcome every word that fell from Kant as a ray of light and truth, when he would write verse after verse in his honour, telling how once he lay sighing in chains in the place where one nothing feels and nothing thinks ; “but god Apollo came. The chains gave way ; my look was high ; he gave me Kant.” Or again, “Apollo spake ; and, shining bright, I saw the Muses dance in Tempe's vale, flung up my golden hat, heard Kant, and tried a new song

¹ *Letters for the Furtherance of Humanity*, part vi. (probably 1796.)

with faltering tongue, as I wandered sideways towards Bacon." We even read that one morning, probably between seven and nine o'clock, Kant's lecture on the subject of Time and Eternity had been so inspiring, that, in the afternoon, Herder turned it into verse in the style of Pope or Haller, Kant's favourite poets, and next day the master himself read the poem before the assembled audience with approval.

We have seen that Kant prophesied much from "this turbid genius, if once his fermentation worked off;" but Kant, with his horror of the "Romantic," Kant, who once at least was balked of marriage because he took such a time calculating the advantages and disadvantages of a wife and the cost of the same, was probably more amused or even alarmed than edified by this hot-headed young man who worshipped Hamann and talked like the *Song of Solomon*. Yet, on Herder's side, the admiration was beyond doubt very genuine, and the influence profound. A hundred years ago it was prophesied that within a century Kant would have attained the reputation of Jesus Christ; and, though the prophecy has hardly been justified by the result, it will be universally admitted that it was impossible for so receptive a nature as Herder's to come in contact with what Goethe calls "the most philosophic mind that has existed," without a life-long impression. Nor must we lay too much stress on the assertion of the editors of the *Reminiscences*, that Herder was only attracted by Kant's lectures on astronomy, mathematics, and physical geography, but took refuge from his metaphysics in poetry or the last work of Rousseau. Such a statement is too evidently suggested by after-events.

The fact is, neither Kant nor any one else at this time drew a hard and fast line between his metaphysics and the rest of his teaching. Kant in his lectures always worked upon Baumgarten or Wolff, and never taught his own system as such; indeed, at this time he had no dogmatic system at all, but contented himself for the most part with bringing the English scepticism to bear upon the orthodox dogmatism of Wolff, with rather startling results. Of course it is quite possible that Herder, with his

craving for the beautiful in nature and poetry, was glad enough to turn to something human and genuine after lectures on metaphysics; few would deny such aids to frail humanity. But in his early letters and writings there is not a trace of disagreement with Kant on philosophy. Indeed, it is absurd to talk of disagreement between a boy of twenty and a mature philosopher. Besides, disagreement is impossible with a man who has no dogmatic system; pure scepticism alone is above or beneath attack, and Kant at this time was full of the English philosophy, or negation of philosophy, as we also hear it called. Hume, as he says in a passage almost painfully familiar, had roused him from his dogmatic slumber;¹ and this English line of thought continued almost unchecked till 1766, when the *Dreams of a Visionary* were written in answer to Swedenborg, after which came a long silence whilst the *Kritik* was a-preparing. Accordingly we find that, till about a year after Herder had left Königsberg, Kant's work chiefly consisted in mathematics and physics. No one was aware how vast a power was hidden in that quiet little man, by whom, as Heine says, the good people of Königsberg set their watches. Experience was the watchword of the time; Hume and Rousseau ruled the advanced thought of Europe together or in turn, and many years were yet to pass before Kant could take the sceptre up. For the present, in spite of his independence, he was content to study the commands of the other two kings. In the first lecture which Herder attended he treated the question, "Are there any spirits besides our own souls?" in a light and ironical manner that seems to have been a mixture of Hume and Voltaire. In 1762 he had written a pamphlet on the false subtlety of the syllogistic figures. The same year Rousseau's *Emile* appeared, and for one day Kant gave up his regular walk, such was the charm of this book. In 1763 he published his "only possible (not even this certain) argument for God's existence," and next year his treatise on "the Beautiful and Sublime," which Herder

¹ Preface to the *Prolegomena*, 1783.

compared to Winckelman and Burke. In 1764, too, there came to Königsberg a famous wild man of the woods with his boy, no less wild, delighting the experimental philosophers and the readers of Rousseau, learned or gentle, by his free and fearless ways and honest mien, Kant taking especial interest in the apparition.¹

On the whole, therefore, we may say that even to the keenest sighted of men the Kant of 1764 presented a very different appearance to the Kant of 1781 and onwards up to to-day. In 1764 there was no text-book to Kant, no talk about rivalry between Immanuel Christ and Immanuel Kant, no prophecies that within five years Christianity would be extinct, no promise to create God at next day's lecture, no learned discourse about noumenon and phenomenon, reason and understanding, and the rest. The star in the German drama of thought was still learning his part, and none were aware of his powers, himself perhaps as little as any. His influence on Herder is best described in Herder's own words quoted above. He taught him to look fearlessly and cheerfully in the face of nature. He showed him the mystery of the firmament, the wonders of the earth and sea, the wonders of the heart of man; showed him how beautiful is freedom, how absurd is despotism in thought, how vast the range which the mind of man may embrace, yet how pleasant a thing it is to have the foot on fact. Kant set him free from the place of dogmatism where "one nothing feels and nothing thinks," and bade him resist the shadows of an unreal metaphysic and they would flee from him; "for, though there are limits beyond which metaphysics cannot go, yet what is knowable is enough for man."

It is also very significant that Herder so often speaks of Kant as the gift of Apollo, and sings of a vision of Muses dancing in Tempe's vale whilst he was listening to a lecture in the stuffy room of a German *privat-docent*.² Evidently he derived more from Kant's teaching on the æsthetic than the

¹ Kant wrote a paper on the subject for the *Königsberg Journal*.

² The temperature in Kant's room is said to have been kept at 75° Fahrenheit: cf. Prof. Wallace's *Kant*, p. 41.

more strictly philosophic side. His eyes were opened to the glories of external nature, the vastness of the universe with history for time and astronomy for space; and thus, through nature, beauty was revealed. After all, then, it was not needful to mope and moan like a Trescho with eye always on navel in self-righteous humility. In Kant he found a man that was no pedant (the only one of all his teachers, Herder used afterwards to say), a man full of enthusiasm, to whom no knowledge was indifferent; who knew the surface of the whole globe almost as well as his native Königsberg; who did not regard the beautiful as merely a useful exponent of religious dogma; but was indeed free from dogma, and taught not philosophy but how to philosophise, making the search for truth a part of life itself, not to this or that learned professor but to everyone who deserved the name of man; each one then must think out his own salvation, but lose sight of his morbid peculiarities in the glories of the universal; for what is the "history of our own heart" compared to the history of one bright particular star—compared to the history of the holy spirit of man?

It is at this point of universality that the cheerful clearness of Kant most nearly coincided with the mystic utterances of the oracle Hamann; and we naturally find, therefore, that this universality in Herder, as the natural product of two such parents in thought, continued throughout life the leading principle of his work. Henceforward he would be universal or nothing; he would build on the broadest basis the deepest truths of nature and humanity, or he would deny the possibility of foundation at all. The grey ghosts of the schools, the whims of the philosophers, the dogmatic theorising of all sects, orthodox as well as pietistic, must submit themselves to scrutiny, and go on their way as best they might, leaving room for what had been found eternally beautiful and true for all men, from Miriam with her timbrel to Rousseau with his Heloïse. It is hard for us, who have seen this reaction in its birth, its progress, and perhaps its decline, to appreciate now the joy with which its first movements were greeted by a young and ardent soul like

Herder's a hundred and twenty years ago. To us, therefore, his praises of Kant and Hamann may seem to have a false tone of exaggeration, yet from any who in his youth has tasted the first joys of liberty and the merry excitement of ghost-chasing he will receive full sympathy, perhaps not unmixed with pity.

Yet in spite of all friendships, in spite of an intercourse with two of the greatest thinkers in Germany and the advances he had made in general society, Herder was not quite at his ease in Königsberg. We begin to see something of that nervous restlessness which never quite forsook him. It is so hard to find circumstances that exactly fit in with one's ideal of life, so hard to say, "here or nowhere is my North America." In Königsberg he seems to have been oppressed by the mercantile spirit of the place; the air began to seem thick and Bœotian, affording little nurture to the delicate plants of poesy and refined enthusiasms. Even the Collegium, where his work was mainly set, was becoming an annoyance; perhaps the authorities had never quite recovered from that rude shock about the wig; certainly Herder found that a man of twenty could not make an ideal school in a day. This honourable old-maidenish Frederica with her sixty years, with her "scars of religion and wrinkles of pedantry," passable enough in her youth, now began to wear a very jaded and worn appearance, not to be improved by the copious use of rouge.¹

Accordingly, when in the autumn of this year (1764) an invitation came from Professor Lindner in Riga, asking if Herder were willing to take the post of assistant or colleague (*collaborator*) in the cathedral-school of that town, the proposal was at once agreed to with very little regret. Lindner had been rector of the school, but was about to leave for Königsberg as professor of poetry. He was an intimate friend of Hamann, who, as will be remembered, had made his business venture from Riga. Through Hamann and Hartknoch he had heard tidings of this successful young Herder,—his knowledge, his

¹ Letter from Herder to Lindner : *Lebensbild*, vol. i. p. 311.

verse-making, and methods of instruction. As soon as the idea was started Hamann was especially enthusiastic in commending this "young man with the maidenly soul of a Virgil."¹ Two short addresses on school matters were all that were required as further evidences of efficiency, and it was agreed that Herder should start in November, though it was mid-term.

Before he went he was obliged to take an oath to return if he were required as a soldier, so strict was Father Fritz with his children. On the 11th of November a terrible fire broke out in Königsberg, which lasted five or six days, and destroyed the greater part of the town, Herder looking mournfully on whilst the flax-warehouses blazed up in flame, and the church steeples came crashing to the ground. He celebrated the occasion in an ode on the *Ashes of Königsberg* in the style of Jeremiah, but in rhymed stanzas and with an occasional hint at Greek legend. On the whole it is the most successful of his poems so far, and contains no allusion to the phoenix, though the poet consoles himself with a comparison to the Resurrection. About ten days afterwards he started for Riga, leaving the dreary skeleton of the town still smoking behind him, and quitted Prussian territory with its ruthless military laws and stern ways, apparently far more in joy than sorrow; "ready to kiss the ground for joy," as he said in after-days. For he was free; and full of hope he went forward, the whole world still lying in front.

¹ Hamann to Lindner: *Lebensbild*, vol i. p. 317.

CHAPTER IV.

RIGA, 1764—1769.

“ When he finishes refection,
 Knife and fork he never lays
 Cross-wise, to my recollection,
 As do I in Jesu’s praise.
 I the Trinity illustrate
 Drinking watered orange-pulp,
 In three sips the Arian frustrate,
 While he drains his at one gulp.”

IN A SPANISH CLOISTER.

JOURNEYING to the north-east from Königsberg for nearly two hundred miles, after some days Herder emerged from the vast pine-forests of Courland, now damp and heavy with autumn, and far away across a bare sandy plain he would see the great tower of Riga rise (tallest tower in all the Russias, no less than 440 feet, the guide-books tell us), under sight of which he was to spend the next four and a-half years, painted by fond after-memory as the happiest of his life.

The quaint old town, with its German streets, narrow, high-piled, and twisted, all hemmed in by the high protecting walls and fortress towers, unencumbered as yet by the bald regularity of the modern Russian suburbs, would take the traveller’s mind back to the days, five hundred and sixty years before, when Bishop Adalbert, aided by merchants from Bremen, founded Riga as the headquarters of the redoubtable Order of the Brethren of the Sword, whose aim it was to further free trade, and the power of the Church, by teaching the heathen the Gospel of the steel.¹ The Order, having might on their side,

¹ Just mentioned in Carlyle’s *Frederick*, vol. i. p. 118. This Adalbert, bishop of Livonia, founder of the “Sword-Brothers,” must not be confused with Adalbert, bishop of Prag, who stamped his life on Prussia, in the form of a crucifix, some two centuries earlier.—(*Frederick*, vol. i. p. 82.)

prospered in their holy cause, and, uniting themselves to the kindred body of Teutonic knights, continued to possess the land for some three centuries, Riga also becoming a member of the Hanseatic League. But when Luther and the Reformation came, the hearts of the men of Liefland, or Livonia as we call it, were estranged from the Holy Mother, and the knights finding their strength gone from them, being hard-bested, too, by Russia and Sweden, appealed to Sigismund of Poland, who adopted Liefland amongst his children, and allowed her to establish the reformed practice of religion. Things went quietly enough till a stronger than Poland appeared, and in 1621 Gustavus Adolphus came swooping over sea from Stockholm, so that Riga was Swedish possession for ninety years without a change; till again, after a terrible siege, accompanied by famine and pestilence, it surrendered half in ruins to Peter the Great, during the pitiful business of the Northern war, just before Charles XII. retired to his five years' sleep in Turkey.¹ The province was finally confirmed to Russia in the peace of 1721, so that when Herder arrived it had almost recovered from its disasters, and was full of joy at the energy of new life within it. Like the rest of the Baltic states, Liefland seems at that time to have been comparatively indifferent to what rulers she owed allegiance provided they let her alone and allowed her to pursue her trade in peace. She was beginning to feel the pleasure of safety under the protection of a vast empire, and her enthusiasm for Russia was great. The very summer before, Riga had been visited by Catherine herself, and had blossomed out into all festivity to do her honour. But the town was still German at heart; the German language was generally spoken; Lutheranism was nearly universal; and Russians, Swedes, Poles, Jews, and Livonians went together to make up a kind of ideal German trading-republic, based on affectionate reminiscences of the Hanseatic League, with a careful preservation of ancient patriotic customs.

¹ Carlyle's *Frederick*, vol. i. p. 428.

For the rest, Herder would find the general spirit of the place to be much like Königsberg, except that here there was no university to restrain the mercantile tone, and social relations were freer and more cheerful. Instead of the Pregel here was the Düna, three-quarters of a mile across at its mouth, bearing to and fro on its broad surface the countless masts of trading vessels with their cargoes of tobacco, sugar, leather, paper, and starch as they came in; corn, linseed, hemp, flax, and, above all, timber, on their passage out. A lively enough impression for the traveller, when he arrived and took up his abode in a corner house belonging to the school, which looked on to an open space, now known as the Herder-Platz, adorned in 1864 by a cast-iron bust of Herder himself, resting on a gothic pedestal, also of cast-iron; the whole is elevated on granite steps, and was unveiled in the August of that year to the sound of Luther's "*Eine feste Burg*," with drum accompaniment, sung by the boys and masters of the old cathedral school, now changed into a town gymnasium. The cathedral itself, the school and the town library, were close at hand, as was the shop where Hartknoch was to set up his publishing establishment, and print most of Herder's works that appeared before the world.

The cathedral school seems to have been the only place of education that survived the distresses of the siege, and under Rector Lindner, who did not remove to Königsberg for a few months yet, it had attained high reputation. The town council, or the Thirty Fathers as they were called, kept the supreme management, though the clergy belonging to the chapter appear to have had a voice in the matter; at all events, though Herder was introduced as teacher in the school early in December, he had to submit to an examination in theology in the February after—a specially rigorous examination, as the *Reminiscences* tell us indignantly, owing to the spite and envy of these clerical hearts. Probably some evil reports about free-thinking, deism, Hume's philosophy, hatred of wigs, and similar crimes, had reached their orthodox ears. The examiners, however, applauded

the youth with one voice, and he at once devoted himself diligently to the duties of his office as collaborator.

What these duties exactly were it is hard to discover. The post had been newly instituted in compliance, we may imagine, with representations from the practical merchants of Riga that the old-fashioned learning was useless for their sons in after-life. The same complaint is made again and again, that the education of the grammar schools and universities does not help a man to make his living. But it was a new cry then, however vulgar now; and accordingly the new collaborator, besides giving general aid to any of his seven colleagues, wherever he was wanted, was especially to instruct the merchants of the future in natural philosophy, history, geography, French, mathematics, and a practice called "style," for which essay-writing is our nearest equivalent. In all this we see the beginning of that system of *Realschule*, or scientific schools, that have since become so prominent in Germany, though it has by no means uprooted the old-fashioned gymnasium so much as is wished by those who regard the education of their sons as a certain amount of well-invested capital, that will give them a good start in the world, and enable them to invent steam-engines and comfortable arm-chairs. No post could have been more welcome to Herder at the time. Fresh from the scientific lectures of Kant and his studies in Bacon, Newton, and Hume, he entered upon his work with all the enthusiasm that a new departure in theory and practice can give. Here at length was something both new and real; here he could rebel without being a traitor, for his fight for pedantry was now on a fair and open field, and every stroke should be applauded by those whom he served; he need no longer soothe with pretence the ruffled hearts of Pietists, nor feign a belief in the all-sufficiency of the Latin grammar.

But his own view of his position is best gathered from two speeches he delivered, one in his first year at Riga, the other probably in his second; and, as his theory of education did not greatly change in afterlife, it may be as well here to examine their general drift. His public instalment in his office had been

postponed; for, since a new rector was expected shortly, the thrifty minds of the Thirty deemed that one ceremony was sufficient for both. In May 1765 old Rector Lindner went on his way to profess poetry in Königsberg, his departure being celebrated by Herder in an ode divided into choruses for the boys and solos for the "priest" in strophe and antistrophe, something after the manner of a *carmen seculare*. In June the new rector came in the person of Schlegel, a former colleague of Herder's in the old Friedrich's-College; he was no relation to Johann Adolph Schlegel, famous father of more famous sons, now quietly at work with his books and parish far away in Hanover, his sons hardly yet born. This Schlegel of Königsberg and Riga was six years older than Herder, and survived him six years, dying in 1810 of old age and a broken heart at the disasters that befell Sweden and her king, in whose favour he stood high. On his arrival the Thirty, always with an eye to thrift, decreed that the ceremony of installation should take place on the 27th of June, also the third anniversary of the day on which the "Wild Cat" of Russia commenced her happy and scandalous reign. Herder's speech on this occasion has been preserved to us, and printed in full by his son.¹

After briefly thanking his patrons for their confidence in him and the favours he had received, having no wish, as he says, to bring before practical men a mere skeleton of common-places, "especially in a town where monkish learning no longer rules," he proceeds at once to sketch the duties of his new position, and then proposes, as the main theme of his discourse, the question "How far, even in a school, Grace must prevail." Shortly explaining what he means by Grace or the Graces, he proceeds boldly, almost recklessly, thus:

No; it is unfortunately not the first conception that rises in one's mind when a schoolmaster is named, that over his cradle the Graces of heaven were watching, that in his youth he devoted his learning to them,

¹ *Lebensbild*, vol. i. part ii. pp. 42-75. Here and throughout this book my accounts of Herder's speeches and works are of course very much compressed.

that they accompanied him to school, and chose for their workshop as it were a room full of dust. Too seldom, when we meet a schoolmaster, do we find him suave in society and in school, politeness on his lips and in his bearing. On the contrary, most often we find that his circle of knowledge begins with the Latin grammar of Donatus, "our first book of martyrs," and ends with some barren attempts at ontology; his method is relentless pedantry; the so-called morality that he teaches is only the result of slavish compulsion; and the "best behaviour" is only the stiffness of leading-strings, that end in making the scholar politely rude. He is a terror to the boys, and his home, instead of being the abode of the muses, is a dry-as-dust hell. This is the idea of learning which we generally give our children. Schools are the first prisons with which they are threatened, and in them we force them to sit still, to learn by heart, and to go through heaven knows what other chivalrous exercises. All the knowledge that a boy learns at school, we think it only right and proper that he should clear away like so much steam as soon as he reaches man's estate, if he would not have his wits choked. The consequence is that our brains are formed first by our nurses; then re-cast by the schoolmaster; and for the third time completely re-modelled by the world.

In this picture of the common schoolmaster old Rector Grimm of Mohrungeu is plainly in Herder's mind, though probably he had not to go far for models. He goes on to say, that this unhappy result is only natural, since only a man of depressed station or "unfriendly Minerva" would choose to ply the homely usher's slighted trade, and the finest spirit would lose something of its European polish after forty years' exile in Siberia; thus the schoolmaster is limited to his rude little circle and the petty economics of his own household. Then follows a sketch of an ideal schoolmaster:

The jewels on his breast-plate must be called insight or sympathy and trust or honesty, whilst, like another Aaron, he bears the name of his children written on his heart. No amount of learning will make up for the want of insight. On the contrary, a vast amount of knowledge would be rather detrimental to him than advantageous as far as education was concerned. With thoughts scattered to all four winds of heaven he would lose sight of the circle of boys, and, plunged in the contemplation of his own learned schemes, he would hurry them hither and thither, or forget their education altogether. If you tie an eagle to a child's go-cart he will either tear himself loose, or, in a moment of inspiration, will

carry the cart with him up to the stars of heaven, and the child will be spilled.

For a schoolmaster extraordinary learning is not needful, but he must have talent, that he may inspire his children with thorough knowledge as by a pleasant charm : and this is that Grace without which no man can become a perfect teacher. But the tyrant, how different it is with him ! The boy longs to wander through the pleasant fields of Paradise, but the tyrant comes, all covered with frost, and drags him over ice and snow. In vain is the torture ; “ school-implements ” (rulers and canes) avail not ; ambition avails not ; promises of future advantage—all are to no purpose ; without the charm of grace they are as nothing. See, O stripling, he continues with ecstasy, I will make the years of thy youth not doleful years, but pleasant to thy heart. On flowers will we wander forth ; give me thy hand that I may lead thee into happiness. Thou murmurest at thy youth ; I, too, was once a boy ; I murmured as thou, but, believe me, I could wish myself back again. It is still before thee to choose the good and be a light to thy friends, or to choose the evil and become a grief to thy father and heaviness to her that bare thee. Secondly, the ideal master must inspire confidence : and for this, too, no learning, no severity, will be of help. On his forehead must be read the simple and sublime truth of a father, who says nothing that he does not think. Such an one will his pupils follow on the difficult road : they hang on his lips. O, my imagination is lost in contemplation of a spot so fair, where Grace such as this rules between the master and the boys ! It is no longer a school, it is a pleasant garden of flowers. The master goes his way with cheerful brow among friends who have given their whole hearts into his charge. No longer a school but an *Indus*, a place for games, a *gymnasium* where the Graces rule supreme. “ The golden age of simplicity lives again ; ” again does Alcibiades, pattern of youth’s virtues and errors, hang on the neck of his Socrates.

After some advice to parents to restrain the increasing luxury of the age, and a few words on his more special duties, he explains how, though a school ought not to be a dancing academy nor a gymnasium of compliment, yet there should be no contradiction between the manners of school and the manners of the world ; the schoolmaster must therefore be a model of good manners and polished behaviour. The orator then, feeling that enough had been said, “ for it is best to promise little and fulfil much,” addressed a few words to each section of his audience, from his boys to the town council, and so reaches his exordium :

“May our school, our children, and our parents, flourish! May Riga flourish! the town where refinement is combined with industry and usefulness; prosperity is combined with friendship and politeness, obedience with freedom, thought with belief, grace with knowledge of the world; Riga, that might be called Geneva under the shadow of Russia; prosperity to her trade, her citizens, her fathers, and her queen.”

After a few words in praise of the “Wild Cat,” and her visit to Riga the year before, he finished by “singing” an ode of his own composition in honour of her coronation, inviting all true patriots to join him in the strain.

This panegyric of the Graces seems to have raised some dubitations in the minds of the merchants of Riga, for, in the published version of the speech, Herder inserted a long passage, of which we only possess a fragment, to explain that he was far from wishing to transform their sons into polished puppets of the French school, against which Rousseau had uttered his lamentations. His Grace was a far other lady than the be-powdered and befrizzled dancing mistress of France.

“Nay!” he cries, “let the Graces themselves appear! I see, I see them coming; the three sisters of sweetness, Aglaia, Thalia, and Euphrosyne, the daughters of Jupiter, born of Harmony; naked are they, like the truth, full of noble simplicity, that is of kin to the blessed peace of Olympus; their hair flies out to the wind from under garlands ever green; garlands are in their hands; their arms are intertwined; goddesses of Harmony, I lay my picture at your feet; crown it with your wreaths!”

This also must have been a very beautiful apparition, very different from the artificial dancing-mistress; only people need eyes to see it.

The second public speech on school matters was probably delivered about a year after this, and treats of the relation that the study of foreign languages ought to bear to the study of the mother tongue. Herder begins with a few words of characteristic regret over the days when the world was young—

When, according to the sublime simplicity of our revelation, there was only one speech and language in all the world. But now each tongue has its peculiar character, and the mother-tongue is always best suited to a people's way of thought. Hence, it is almost impossible to get at the kernel of a foreign language. With much labour I may, perhaps, master the dead languages according to their words; but their spirit has eluded me: and it is a good thing that the people who spoke them are extinct, else they would accuse me of who knows what ignorance, barbarity, and rudeness. And yet to these foreign languages I must sacrifice my most flourishing years, my most lively memory, the brightest fire of my youth, just as children used to be thrown into the arms of Moloch; though things instead of words, thoughts instead of signs, would give me far more nourishment. These are the objections raised by many against the study of languages; objections that have nature on their side, though the present condition of art is against them. But if each nation confined itself to its own language how slowly the world would advance; a Newton in Germany would be torturing himself with a discovery that the English Newton had unsealed long before. Nor can we trust to translations, in which the charm of form, the delicate bloom of expression, is necessarily lost. Let us read the works of the greatest men in their own tongues. With my German industry I try to combine genuine English humour, the wit of the French, the sparkle of Italy. I will take the stream of the Thames as my great example: "Deep, yet clear; gentle, yet not dull; strong, without rage; without o'er-flowing full." (In this form Denham's¹ verse appears in German prose.) But where, then, can we make an end? A boundless sea, a labyrinth of languages, stretches before us. After all, the mother tongue is most important for a man; it is part of his national character; through it he babbled his first words; above all, it is essential for every work of art in poetry and eloquence. What great author has written a masterpiece in a foreign tongue? Why should we be crawling imitators of Horace and Virgil, or even of the modern French?

In this strain he continues to the end, without definitely deciding the question, though he hints that at all events it will be safe to pay at least three times as much attention to modern languages as to the ancient.

From these two discourses we can derive a sufficiently accurate notion of Herder's views on education, its method and its substance. In the air of Riga in 1765 all this sounded

¹ Denham's *Cooper's Hill*.

strange ; what now seems common-place, or merely unpractical, was then revolutionary ; and we cannot but admire this unfriended stranger, only twenty-one years old, who, with sweet voice and flashing eye, steps on the rostrum, and causes the traditional foes of boyhood to tremble like the gods in their twilight ; nor can we much wonder if the wigs wagged ominously, and boded no good for the upstart who dared to say that schoolmasters had no grace ; who called them unmannerly, rude, and mean ; vain in their futile knowledge of the *Book of Martyrs*, and in their cult of the fiery Moloch ; himself promising to show them the right way, to lead his charge beside the flowery meads, having cast away his wig, the symbol of so much that would follow soon, unless the thing were checked. But there was still hope, for they too had been young, and now were old.

At all events, with his pupils there could be no doubt about Herder's popularity ; amongst them he actually did manage to realize something of his hopes. One, who afterwards rose to be arch-deacon, or something of that kind, wrote many years hence : " His method of teaching was so excellent, his intercourse with his pupils so human, that they attended no lecture with greater pleasure than his." On this point the evidence of all the witnesses agree ; three old ladies adding their testimony, blooming girls at that time, and " of very distinguished families," too ; they took private lessons from him ; and " long," we are told, " did he live in their hearts."

During the first few months in this new town, it is true, the young schoolmaster was inclined to despond, owing to his loneliness, though his external position was far more comfortable than at Königsberg ; his lodging was convenient and his salary sufficient ; in fact, as he writes to Hamann, he had " everything that Luther wished for in the fourth prayer, except a wife and the rest." But, unfortunately, man does not live by bread alone. " I have very light work," he continues ; " and as the land here might be called a *Solum papaveriferum, somniferum*, I am almost asleep. I have no entrance into society, and have nothing to

goad me to small undertakings. You must wake me up." The letter then proceeds to literature, and Herder offers to send an English copy of No. 45 of the *North Briton*, an offer which Hamann accepts, though he adds he would rather see the *Essay on Woman*, which is a significant notice of the disturbances then agitating England, and the interest they aroused in the learned of Europe, though as yet the telegraph was not.¹ In another letter to Hamann, Herder complains that he was still unripe for his post; he was teaching when he ought to be learning; he had no opportunity of seeing life, nor enough society to acquire the manners of the world; in fact, he felt very much like "a seven months' embryo." Hamann's answer displays unexpected insight. He remarks that it is better to begin by groaning than by boasts; he urges his young friend to seek consolation with the great men of old, but above all to think less and live more; to follow his genius for music, and, if he were not too old or anxious about his eyes; to learn drawing and even painting in company with his pupils; also to go to concerts, and see as many people as possible.

Following this advice in every point, except perhaps as to the painting, Herder soon found his opportunities increase. At his private lessons he won the hearts not only of his pupils, but of their parents too. The doors of Riga society soon stood open to him, Hamann probably sending a few letters of introduction besides, for Hamann was still well remembered in Riga for good or bad. The Berens family, in whose service Hamann had visited London, seem to have been the first to be gracious, and the three brothers continued his firm friends. One of them, Christoph, rose to be a senator in Riga, a man very distinguished for honest and patriotic virtues. According to the editors of the *Reminiscences*, it was he who in 1782 drew up the scheme of the armed neutrality of the Northern Powers to check the hectoring

¹ January, 1765. No. 45 of the *North Briton* was published in April, 1763, and Wilkes was prosecuted for this and the *Essay on Woman* early in the next year.

ways of Great Britain, which even the loss of America could not disillusionise.

In the early summer of 1765 Hamann himself, finding Königsberg narrow and oppressive, as he said, also trying to shake from his mind the image of the too-fascinating Anna Regina, came to Mitau, within a day's journey from Riga southward, and once more essayed the duties of a hofmeister to the establishment of a kindly gentleman, who owned large grounds and—which seemed more important to Hamann, with his powers of book-swallowing—a large library. He did his best to make a good hofmeister; in his letters to Herder we find commissions for the purchase of hazel-hens (moor-hens, or perhaps black-game) jostling strangely with dissertations on Swedenborg or Shaftesbury; he went to Warsaw with his patron for some months, but returned to Mitau for the winter, and at length hastened back to Königsberg and the arms of Anna Regina.

To Herder the proximity of his master supplied the goad which he desired; he was awakened from his drowsiness and stimulated to fresh endeavours. He visited Mitau at least twice; once in the summer of 1765, and again in spring of next year, “as soon as the Düna was open,” for during winter communication was difficult, if not impossible. On this occasion he was accompanied by Hartknoch, who within the last few months had definitely established himself, wife and all, in Riga, as bookseller and publisher for the *Russian Geneva*. We have an account of the return-journey in a letter written to Hamann the same night in the form of a chapter of “My Shandyan Romance to my Uncle Toby Shandy.” They had parted at two o'clock on a day of rain and wind, never to meet again in the flesh. Most of the drive home was accomplished in silence, but it ended safely in spite of the dangers of the Düna, swollen with the rains of spring and the melting snow, perhaps still strewn with groaning blocks of ice; “two girls drowned that very day,” Herder writes; an ominous journey, for all the would-be Shandyan humour of the tale.

But for the present the prospect seemed bright enough. Herder wrote to Trescho that this summer of 1765 had been the happiest of his life; and hopes further that the precious heart finds itself healthy enough to compose a *Bible of Life* as a counterpart to that old *Bible of Death*, implying that, after all, Golgotha bones are perhaps not just the right thing of which to build a rose-bower. Belonging to this period we find several little poems to celebrate births or marriages amongst his friends, as well as an occasional funeral oration over the grave of one who had ceased to join their circle. Evidently he was soon a man much sought after. "The mercantile tone prevails," he tells us, "and a man of learning must accommodate himself thereto." It may be imagined that no "man of learning" was more ready to accommodate himself than Herder. His greatest delight was to visit the wealthy merchants in their country-houses and pleasant little summer residences at some distance from the town, generally near the seashore. He would reward his hosts by short poems in praise of their dwelling, two or three of which have survived; one, an ode in honour of a country-house, Grafenheide, with its sea-views, avenues, and woods, was set to music some thirty years afterwards, and is perhaps still a pride to the place.

As though to complete his happiness, Hartknoch in the autumn of this year finally determined to publish henceforth at Riga, and not at Mitau. Being a man too bright and gay-hearted, as Herder thought, distinctly to profess religion as a means of livelihood, according to his first intention, he had been won over in Königsberg to follow the book-trade in preference, and now, with his simple-hearted, cheery young wife, he and his household make a pleasant picture. Of an evening Herder was generally to be found there amongst a merry circle of other friends, mostly interested in literature and things of the mind. Their greatest pleasure was to listen whilst Herder read them some fragment of the concluding cantos of Klopstock's *Messias*, not yet appeared in print, or extracts from other good books, above all from his own translation of Yorick's *Sentimental*

Journey; and then, to reward the reader, Hartknoch would play any music that had lately reached Riga, and would sing besides. With their recitation and music, converse, more or less elevated, and refreshment, chiefly, it appears, in the form of apples, the friends often remained together till far into the night, sitting beside their nectar, "red wine with apples in it," as at a feast of the gods. Many years afterwards Herder writes to one of the circle: "The times to which your letter transplants me are pleasant beyond most; they are to me a beautiful dream, and such they will remain. The remembrance of the friends of my youth is like the enjoyment of a fair garden; to me not one of them has grown old, all live still in my memory as they lived at that time."

For a year or two everything remained bright. Herder was full of ambitious schemes of authorship, and was already getting something accomplished. In his own phrase, "The meadows of knowledge still lay fresh before him in all the radiance of morning." His health was good and even improved. We are told:

"The hard work of his youth with its necessary moderation and his delicate maidenly chastity rewarded him with that gift beyond price, bodily health. True, even in Riga he was still delicate, slim and thin, rather spirit than body, but still strong, elastic, and healthy to the core. Of this period, really the golden age of his life, he always thought with love, tenderness, and longing."¹

He was evidently taking Hamann's advice, to live as well as think, and now at last he had full opportunity, as far as society in Riga went. He was enthusiastic for the revival of public spirit in the place, and seems to have had hopes of calling to life something of the old Hanseatic League, with Riga at its head, as a republic under the protection of Russia. It is worthy of notice, that as yet we find no trace of hostility between Teuton and Slav as such. The town was a brotherhood, no longer of

¹ *Reminiscences*, vol. i. p. 95.

the sword but of the purse. In October 1765 the new town-hall was finished. Early in the morning of the festal day the people of Riga were aroused by three volleys of cannon from the walls, and the clash of bells from the great steeple. The old folk and the elders of all the guilds, great and small, proceeded two by two towards the church, the chief magistrate in his coach following behind. A solemn address was given in the church, another in the judgment-hall, and, in the afternoon, every one crowded to hear this young Herder in the school, before going to the great vocal and instrumental concert in the new town-hall. Herder treated of the theme, "Whether we still have a nationality such as the Ancients had," and in after-life he published the speech though in considerably altered form.¹ It is chiefly devoted to praise of the German tongue and German patriotism, with lamentations over the low estate of German art and literature, and encouragements for the future. But he thought it not inconsistent on the same occasion to write a lengthy ode in praise of Russia and the Czarina. "Thine, O Fatherland," he cries, "thine is this house (the town-hall), under the shadow of Catherine: she herself in full majesty has sanctified it to thee! As long as the eagle heads of Russia are joined in one, so long will justice and equity flourish here." The fact seems to be that for all his German patriotism he was far from being exclusive; he could never regard one race as necessarily better than another. Under the teaching of Rousseau, his head was full of bright ideas about universal brotherhood, peace, and the friendship of kindred souls all the world over. At intervals throughout his life we find him advocating schemes for the foundation of international leagues and societies, to further co-operation amongst the learned and virtuous of the earth.

It was no doubt for this purpose that in 1766 he joined himself to the ancient and august body of Freemasons. Here, perhaps, was the instrument he desired; through this the brotherhood of man might become a realised and visible fact,

¹ In the *Letters for the Furtherance of Humanity*, part v. (1795-6.)

instead of continuing a dreamer's theory. At all events here was a well-established order with claims to the universal, and we cannot over-estimate the charm which anything universal exercised on Herder's mind. Besides, the lodge in Riga had been founded only sixteen years before by some of his greatest friends, and contained all the most influential spirits of the town, enlightened, as they boasted, according to the very best enlightenment of France and Berlin. We read that they placed unlimited confidence in Herder, and elected him secretary before he had passed through the customary grades. There seem to have been vague rumours at one time too that the Freemasons paid for his journey to France, and gave him 100 friedrichsd'or for one of his earlier works;¹ all idle tales, indignantly denied by his widow. "Why," she writes in the *Reminiscences*, "I was already married to him when the book came out; Hartknoch paid us the stipulated fee, one friedrichsd'or the sheet; and we never got another penny for it." Attracted by the Oriental spirit of the concern, and its strange signs and pictures, Herder devoted much time and trouble to its history at first, hoping to inspire it with "a new spirit in accordance with our times." But he soon found that this was mere labour lost, for the august body had come to be regarded by most of its members as a solemn plaything, and by others only as a good social or even mercantile investment. Accordingly, we find hardly any mention of it in his writings or letters, and when he reached Weimar he ceased to be known as a freemason at all, though he still took a distant interest in their proceedings. Once, indeed, a member of the brotherhood offered to increase the circulation of his books by means of the order, and was answered, that Herder would have his books circulate on their own feet or not at all. The promises of these aprons and trowels and mystic signs of universal brotherhood were evidently soon found delusive in the eyes of this ardent young secretary; not by such means then was the Kingdom of Humanity, One

¹ The *Urkunde*.

and Indivisible, to be proclaimed from the Flood to the world's end and the uttermost islands of the sea.

The disappointment was no doubt grievous, and, whether mainly from this cause or from several distresses combined, the winter of 1766-7 opened gloomily. Hamann was alarmed at the despairing tone of his friend's letters, and offered to procure him an appointment as tutor to a boy of thirteen, with the advantages of perfect leisure, change, country air, and a chance of travel. Herder refused emphatically, but with sadness.

I have had no sleep Friday and Saturday night, so anxious about a sermon; yet who goes not forward goes back, and I must retain the only blessings I have, freedom and independence; here at least I am under the shade of a peaceful sycamore, though it's no fruit-tree. True I am surrounded by envious persons, malignant miscreants, pitiful blockheads, who all jump for joy when they see me brought to this pass; here I have the misfortune to be placed under a fellow like S. (Schlegel, always rather a hide-bound and melancholy creature), but there I should remain unknown. Besides, one has not much taste for a country life, and leisure is sometimes mere torture. "Still I am deeply grateful, &c. to you; but you see that I am in a state of mind that no change of place can alter; a joy has taken its flight. Half last night I spent in a lamentable depression of spirits, such as I would not wish to my worst enemy; I could have stamped and cried, only tears will not come. Let these words remain between ourselves; my head is ready to burst; everything is against me. Had I not to go on with my private lessons, because even in this woeful time (which I do my best to conceal) I have found more friends than I could have hoped, I would give up everything and live like a lonely bird in the cathedral school.

He concludes by a wise resolution to put himself under a doctor for a week or two at all events; and indeed it was high time; disappointment, slanderous tongues, the limitations of Schlegel, "the annoyances of a man of learning amongst a pack of money-grubbing merchants on the banks of the distant Düna," all these had combined to overturn the just balance of health in a frame naturally too frail, in spite of all moderation and sobriety; the cold of winter gave the final push, and till February Herder lay sick unto death (life actually despaired of for half a week), owing to pleurisy, inflamed lungs, paroxysms

of fever, and all the accompanying distresses. As soon as he was on a fair way to recovery he determined to let the surgeons of Riga try what they could do with his troublesome eye-fistula. He procured a dispensation or leave of absence from the school for two months, and took leave of his friends by letter, for during the whole eight weeks he was not to go out, nor read, nor write; to this active mind, just launching out into literature and full of first ambition, no wonder such an existence seemed but "the shadow of death," "the ante-room to the realm of the forgotten." We must remember, too, his sick horror at all surgery and operations of blood. But he endured in the hope that when all was over he might see with at least "three-quarters of his eyes," or even go on his way sound of sight for the future. He was not yet twenty-three, and still almost expected to find a heaven on earth dwelt in by angels instead of complex humanity with very little angelic in its complexity; but now, with all these cares and misfortunes and hindrances crowding on his head, he determined that in Riga at least was no heaven; he would stay there one year longer, according to his agreement, and then "this sandbank in the Baltic" must be left; he would take the first call that offered and make for Germany, for Berlin if possible, but anywhere out of Riga.

It might have been expected then that when in the middle of this so-called "eye-cure" an invitation, most flattering to his repute as a schoolmaster, came from St. Petersburg itself, urging him to accept the post of inspector in the Lutheran school of St. Peter in that city, Herder would have caught eagerly at such an opportunity of release. There seems to have been no insurmountable hindrance in the terms of his agreement at Riga, and in his new position he would at least have things his own way, unshackled by Schlegel and jealous conservatism. But he seems to have feared that after all it might be possible for a man of his age to have things too much his own way; he dreaded not so much the responsibility as the economic worries and loss of leisure involved in the management of so large an institution, and, sitting as he was in "the shadow of death,"

without any great confidence in himself, he determined "to leave the question in God's hands"; in other words, not to answer the invitation immediately, but to wait awhile and see how things went.

Meantime the rumour that Herder was going to leave them spread abroad amongst the men of Riga; great was the lamentation of young and old; "friends came with tears in their eyes," imploring him not to leave them comfortless. His popularity reached its height, and was genuine beyond suspicion; even the "crawling backbiters," though they leapt for joy, had to practise the performance in private, fearing the Rigan men and Rigan women. Finally, within a week after the arrival of the letter, the Counsellor Christoph Berens arose in the grave assembly of the Thirty, and proposed, that whereas the town was threatened with the loss of Johann Gottfried Herder, which was much to be regretted, for not only was his reputation high as schoolmaster in the said town, but also as a man of learning and author his fame was likely to extend throughout Germany; seeing that already by his *Fragmente* he had attracted the attention of such men as the famous and learned Herr Gleim in Halberstadt; it therefore became the Thirty to look around them, how they might retain this ornament to their town, that she be not robbed of her lustre at the hands of strangers; he proposed, further, that, for the express benefit of the aforesaid Herder, a special post be created, the office of *Pastor Adjunctus*, or additional curate, with sufficient revenues, for the joint suburban churches of Jesus and St. Gertrude, at present annexed to the pastorate of Bicker.

These proposals were at once adopted and the appointment was duly confirmed in a few days. Herder—who had passed his preliminary examination as preacher soon after his arrival in Riga, and had already filled the pulpit in the cathedral and other churches, when required—submitted in June to another examination on the theme, "The Holy Spirit as the author of human salvation," was ordained priest in July, and solemnly introduced by the archdeacon to the two churches under his

charge. He had left the question "in God's hands," and this was the emphatic answer. After all these proofs of affection and esteem from friends, especially from Berens and the Thirty, it was impossible for him to go with any grace; and though for a time his despondency still remained, and from his letters we may suppose that he regarded his honours more as an additional trouble than a blessing; yet his ideal of life had always been rather as a preacher than a schoolmaster, and his complaints must be attributed to bad health and the disappointment inevitable to every man who reaches in reality what from a distance had seemed sublime. He sent a polite refusal to his admirers in St. Petersburg and at once began his new duties, preaching one sermon every fortnight, besides saints' days and festivals, his churches always crowded, though they stood in the suburbs and he preached in the afternoon.

One other thing there was which may have contributed to bind him to Riga for yet a little while, and may even have proved a stronger tie than all the rest, however much he refused to acknowledge it to himself. Just at this time he gained the friendship of a Madame Busch, herself suffering from some weakness of the eye, which established between them the universal kinship of sorrow. But the story is best told, as far as we need know it, in Herder's own words. Three years after this he wrote for his betrothed a sketch of his past life, in which he incautiously remarked, "to leave Riga I had to tear myself from the arms of an unhappy lady." The indignation of the girl may be imagined, for jealousy of the past is often more bitter, because more hopeless, than jealousy of the present. When at length she answered, it was something like this: "How shall I come to your arms, when another *unhappy lady* has been there before me—is there now for all I know—that woman you left in Riga?" This drew from Herder the following explanation:

You must forgive my smiling; I will clear up the whole matter. Do you know who this unhappy friend was and is? An excellent but very unhappily married lady, between thirty and forty, whose friendship and

daily intercourse I enjoyed together with another honourable man (named Begrow), from whom we kept nothing secret in our hearts. I spent two full years in her house, morning, noon (for I dined there daily), afternoon, and evening till night; and as I from day to day learnt to appreciate better her lively intellect, her kindly heart, and great firmness of character, we lived together as friends, such as the world had few, and Riga none except ourselves. We were daily together; we chatted and read, we quarrelled and comforted each other, we dallied and caressed, and—nothing more. One thought further would have injured our friendship. I have done some service for her and her children; we had in common all joys and cares in which I could take a share; and in me she thus lost a friend, a daily companion, and kindly spirit such as she will certainly never find again in her lifetime. She accompanied me in a yawl full of friends to my ship, though she was extremely afraid of the water; our last kiss—I standing above on the ship speeding to the open sea, she below in the ferry-boat returning to her home, perhaps never to see each other again—was really a kiss of friendship, such as is not often given on the ocean. A terrible storm arose and separated us before we were well out of sight, and I have had no letter from her since leaving France. The whole town knew of our friendship, because for her sake I gave up all the hosts of invitations to parties, and I hardly ever went to preach but she was with me in the carriage. This is the story of my unhappy friend; are you still jealous? Well, I have a ribbon of hers that, on the day of departure, I snatched from her beautiful foot as a remembrance, giving her in return one of Abbt's works that he had given me himself. Should I not send you this ribbon with the little basket I received from you lately? A bond of friendship at the foot of the altar of love is no profanation. Her last words to me were: "Dear Herder, my only wish for you is that your future wife may show you half as much love as I have shown you kindness." Do not think any more of the matter; I can have no secrets from you, &c., &c.

At the candour of this confession we cannot but wonder, and there is not the slightest reason to suppose that it does not contain the whole truth. The age of sentimentality was already far advanced in Germany, though Werther had not loved and died; friendships in Rousseau's manner were the fashion, and there was a great deal of theorising on relations commonly called Platonic; nor was everyone satisfied with theory. In such an atmosphere no one can blame Herder if, overcome by the spectacle most touching to the youthful and unmarried

heart, the sight of a distinguished and beautiful lady in unhappy wedlock, he determined to devote himself entirely to her service. Her husband seems to have raised no objection. To the lady and especially to Herder himself the advantage was great, and for the next two years we accordingly find his activities redoubled.

The *Fragmente*, which had been gradually coming out for some months past, were collectively published in three parts in 1767. *The Torso*, in memory of Thomas Abbt, appeared in the following year; and the three published parts of the *Kritische Wälder* in 1768 and 1769. At the same time he was engaged upon reviews and short treatises for the Königsberg papers and more popular essays in the Riga journal. He also turned his attention more closely than ever to the study of Hebrew and the critical examination of the Old Testament, and he thus laid the foundation for all his future work in life.

But, before we try to form some idea of these beginnings in literature, let us stop at the door of Jesus's or St. Gertrude's church, and, following the young preacher accompanied by Madame Busch from his carriage to the chancel, let us see what the people of Riga (chiefly young men and earnest women, we are told) came out into the suburbs for to hear on those Sunday afternoons long ago. At this period Herder wrote his sermons word for word, a practice which he afterwards modified and even abandoned; but in spite of many entreaties he refused to have them printed, well knowing the difference between a sermon and a pamphlet, for in his own words "sermons must be preached, they must be received from the life, and remain impressed on the heart, not on paper." He never felt himself bound by the letter of what he had written, and readers of his few published sermons must use their imagination to form a sufficient conception of their original force. At this period especially, Herder showed a natural delight in fulness of language. Winckelmann on reading his first book exclaimed, "What new Pindar is this that has arisen in the north?" and in later life Herder would laugh and say, "Certainly my sermons at that

time were tricked out with youthful imagination and eloquence ; all such flowers and leaves fall off as time goes on." Fortunately we are able to judge for ourselves owing to a short treatise called *The Speaker, or Preacher of God*, and his farewell sermon, which has been printed at full length as written, though probably not as spoken.

The former was almost certainly written at the very beginning of the Riga period, as the ideal of what a preacher should be, just as in the school-speech was sketched the ideal of a schoolmaster. Herder begins with a sneer at those witty persons who listen and sleep, and then wake up and laugh ; he then distinguishes the preacher from the poet, from the public orator, from all the play-actors "from Roscius to Garrick," and from the philosophers.

The preacher must be great but quiet, solemn without the poet's ornament, eloquent without Ciceronian periods, powerful without dramatic magic, wise without learned speculations, compliant without diplomatic cunning.

He draws a picture of such a man, the main characteristics taken, it has been supposed, from old pastor Willamov of Mohrungen ; at all events, Herder says the portrait is from memory :

His words are not sermons, for there is none of that stiff sermon style ; nor are they speeches, for there is none of that oratorical thunder and lightning ; nor are they theological treatises, for there is no dogmatic point, no academical explanation, no skeleton of systematic arrangement. He will not begin with exclamations to God, nothing but O ! and Ah ! as if he had just come from Heaven and wanted to storm up again ; but he says a few solemn words of preparation that sink into the soul. As his main theme he takes some common experience that must have come to the notice of all his audience, but as he goes on they will all say, "Here was the thing right under our eyes, and yet we never saw it before ; we must listen to this man, for he sees more than we." But then, like a good schoolmaster, he will give his listeners the joy of making a discovery for themselves. I do not wish to follow his thoughts ; I will think with him ; he must speak what I was just on the point of thinking, and then I shall never forget it. The teaching will be no dry system of morals, no second-hand rules of life, but a picture ; the Idea of the picture is morality ; the composition, a situation of humanity and life ; the colour of the picture is

religion: and thus the sermon is a complete whole. Between such a sermon and the commonplace moral teaching there is as much difference as between a picture by Raphael and a Nürnberg composition; no wonder then that most sermons are found tedious, old-fashioned, and dry.

Turning now to his farewell sermon, which naturally gives us a more complete idea of his actual work in Riga, we find that after briefly stating the cause of this special service and his sorrow at departure, adding discreetly, "We will, as far as possible, repress and conceal all signs of regret at this separation," he gives out his text (James i. 21), and begins at once with an examination of a parson's position:—

The man of the world regards the parson as a useless institution, merely to satisfy human prejudices; the man of wit considers him a mask for the greatest hypocrisy on God's earth; the ordinary citizen thinks the Church a fair way of making a living; the ambitious man thinks it a sphere in which he can display himself; the idle man sees in the Church a place of rest in which one comes off easily with a moderate amount of work; and the ignorant man thinks that on the whole this is the best cloak to hide his narrow views and limited brains. But none of these considerations influenced me; my object was to plant a word that would make the souls of men happy, to save them from the slough of this degenerate age, that abounds in so much that is gross and paltry and vile. This is a parson's one office. In this world nothing really moves us but what is actually human, what is created out of the experiences of our hearts. Most of my own sermons, therefore, all my best, have been *human* (*menschlich*). I have tried to show that our only happiness is to remain true to the foundations of our nature, and to follow no guide but reason and conscience. Humanity, therefore, in its widest circle, with all its noble ideas of God, itself, and Nature, with all its feelings of brotherhood and sympathy, with all its charming duties and high dispositions and capabilities for happiness,—Humanity (*menschlichkeit*) in this wide scope was always the main theme of my sermons, instruction, and exhortation. My manner, too, was human; not occupied in dark and subtle questions and inconceivable mysteries, but reaching as straight and deep as might be to the heart of man. Those of my hearers who used to come to me once or twice, and having, like Noah's dove, plucked off an olive-branch here and there, would fly away again, may deny this; many, too, have been kind enough to call me a philosopher in black cloth, more fitted for the lecture-room than the pulpit; but they do me too much honour; my sermons have been everything rather than learned. I have even

descended to the particulars of everyday life, especially as to the management of children, advice that is more than ever necessary now that education seems to have gone mad, and few know the value of one human soul, for which Christ died. No, if I preached a philosophy, it was always the philosophy of mankind: I spoke a word to make the souls of men happy.

Such, too, was my manner; it has been said that my sermons were like a tinkling cymbal of fine phrases to gain applause for eloquence, a chain of comparisons, pictures, and metaphors, to serve as a half-hour's diversion and win me the title of a tasteful preacher. But I do not consider it high praise when one of my audience pushes his way yawning out of the church-door, and exclaims "What a beautiful sermon!" This noisy praise is nothing to me compared to the quiet sigh or tear of one soul who cheerfully resolves to lead a better life. I have, therefore, never tried to arouse passions, as I might have done, by raising my voice and squeezing out a tear or two. For not much is to be hoped from all this emotion and sentimental hysterics; all this ecstatic devotion, which is as contagious as yawning or the electric spark, passes off as quickly as it came. Hence people have said I was feeble, especially towards the end of a sermon; if this was so, it was unconscious. At all events I have never made my sermons a mere string of biblical words and phrases, without meaning or connexion. We Christians have got into a way of repeating these words, without thinking about their real meaning and context; and so we go on learning and learning, and never come any nearer the knowledge of the truth. But my word was not only the word of man but the word of God, on whom depends our whole existence in time and eternity; I have tried to extend sublime and more worthy ideas of Him; and who then will not admit that a parson's position is above price? How happy if I were assured that the Judge of all the earth would recognise my work for the last few years as not altogether vain! how gladly could I then say with Peter, "silver and gold have I none!" Is there no human soul that would own itself better for my teaching? If not, I may as well lay aside my office with a blush, and have done with it.

For certain good reasons I have refused to have my sermons printed, but my greatest hope is that my words will not be without fruit even in my absence. My only object in going is to learn the world of my God from more sides and to become more useful in my calling, and my greatest hope is at some future time to be able to return to this place with larger powers of service. I do not wish to be remembered with bitterness even by those who have blackened my name; the mistakes and weaknesses due to temperament and years I leave to the forgiveness of my friends. I leave the future with its bitter and sweet in the hand of God, who has

never suffered a man to be utterly unhappy that was true to his Providence and Will. In this parish I have had the fortune to know persons who had noble thoughts and loved religion. Pray for me, my friends, that it go well with me, and that God do for me as it seemeth him best according to his infinite wisdom.

Such is a bare outline of the sermon listened to by the people of Riga in the church of St. Gertrude, crowded to overflowing one Sunday in May 1769. There is sufficient in it to explain the "empty benches," of which the other clergy in the town complained, whenever Herder was preaching, for out in that suburban church was a man who had something to say that the people wanted to hear, and after being drenched with the barren foam of the moral commonplace, and choked with the desert sand of theological controversy, they eagerly caught at this more human treatment, at the risk of offending the more old-fashioned practitioners. That the offence was great and the envy bitter, Herder himself has confessed again and again. After he had left Hartknoch writes to him, "The clergy and Schlegel are especially your enemies." To a soul sensitive almost to womanish delicacy such a position could not long be bearable. Yet he did not finally determine to leave Riga without many searchings of heart. Not much more than a year after this he sent to his betrothed the following account of this period:—

In Liefland within a short time I gained the complete love of the town, the friendship of three of the most worthy people I have ever known (probably Hartknoch, Berens, and Madame Busch or Begrow), the respect of the most original thinkers I have met in my life, of whom and their trust in me I could write whole volumes; on the other side the hatred of the whole body of clergy, though they did not dare to raise a finger against me, and the squint-eyed envy of a few crawling creatures. In spite of this in Liefland I was so free and independent in my life, my actions, and my teachings, as perhaps I shall never be able to be again. Does not this show some strength of character? (people had been whispering, as people will, that he had no character). Loved by the town and my parish, worshipped by my friends and a number of young men who looked upon me as their Christ! (he goes so far in self-defence and to his betrothed), the favourite of the government and the nobility, who

marked me out for Heaven knows what positions—in spite of all I went from the summit of this applause, from the arms of an unhappy lady, deaf to all proposals of short-sighted kindness, amidst the tears and lamentations of every one—I went away, for my genius irresistibly called to me, “Use thy years and look into the world!”

Yes, youth was going by and the world was still to be seen. Little insight into universal life could be gained by a man stranded on a sandbank in the Baltic. England, France, and Holland must at least be visited. He would there learn how other nations educate themselves, and manage to make their truce with the world. May not even “beloved Italy” be reached at last? But we must not suppose that this desire to see “God’s earth” was Herder’s only motive in leaving Riga, though with all a man’s power of self-deception he induced himself to believe it. His position had in fact become insupportably irksome, partly through malicious tongues, partly from the want of intellectual society; for, in spite of all his horror of “the man of learning,” the wits of merchants could satisfy him no more, and he missed the libraries of the more learned towns. But beyond and above all this there were secret annoyances and discontents about his literary ambition, and unsettled questionings of spirit in other directions, that will be further hinted at in the next chapters. On the whole the one and only way of restoring his freedom was to cut all ties and go. In vain did the government offer him this post and the other, if he would but stay awhile; all they could get from him was a vague hope of return at some future time, a hope which Herder himself kept by him for many years. Hartknoch disinterestedly urged the change, and was the first to supply money; other contributions quickly came in; furniture and books were sold to pay off debts; leave of departure was granted, the farewell sermon preached; and the Tuesday after, Herder and Gustav Berens were accompanied in a yawl (or shallop) to the ship by Hartknoch and his wife, Begrow and Madame Busch,—all dread of water overcome in this supreme moment. Hardly was the ship reached when a terrible storm with rain and thunder set in. We may imagine

the woe of the parting, the ribbon snatched from the beautiful foot, the “kiss of friendship on the ocean,” the poor frightened lady rocking up and down in the yawl meantime, the promise to write soon, “unless the sea-nymphs love me more than the Graces on land;” the dreary return home through the wind and rain, “all the party soaked to the skin,” and to one at least the light of her life as it were gone out. Thus, as he says, “among signs and wonders and portents of Heaven,” did Herder go down to the sea in a ship, and was once more free of the past. Was it not to wander over that the world was made so wide?

CHAPTER V.

DEUTSCHLAND, 1764—1769.

“ Cold hater of his kind,
 A sea-cave suits him, not the vulgar hearth !
 What need of tongue-talk, with a bookish store
 Would stock ten cities.”

ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY.

WE should find it impossible to estimate the significance of Herder's work, both in youth and in manhood, unless we first formed for ourselves some idea of German thought at the time, and—which is more important—of German life and character. It is my object to illustrate in Herder certain tendencies of the last century, or rather one tendency that worked its way along several channels ; and a tendency is a meaningless term, unless we understand from what it diverged, and from what sources it gathered strength.

It is still through the individual that we must reach the universal ; the more particular we become the wider is the generality, till, if we could but see with perfect clearness the heart and soul, the essential spirit, of the individual, we should find it co-extensive with mankind. It is this which gives to all personality that force and directness, that humour and ready appeal, which is not to be replaced by the most carefully-deduced abstractions. For this reason I have chosen in the present chapter to indicate the main currents of German life at that time by giving some account of the leading men with whom Herder was connected in his life or works at this earlier period, rather than by the easier method of ready-made summaries and results, which to the reader too often remain unrealities hanging in the air.

The history of German literature up to this century is like some long avenue of statues that stood on the plains of Elis in honour of the conquerors in the games, and led the wondering stranger on through marble limbs once hot with conflict to the temple where the Zeus of Pheidias was enthroned in grandeur, though, as Heine tells us, he dared not arise lest his sublime head should burst through the temple roof. Only after the human statues could the worshipper bow before the final touch of genius that made the Zeus divine. Even so the Zeus who understood German¹ sits at the end of the avenue of strange and human statues, who in their day fought a good fight, whose limbs were once hot with conflict, though now they serve but as guideposts to the temple's place. Or this interruption in our rhapsody may be compared to the Homeric catalogue of ships, or to any other list of men who have given their strength, no matter how small, to strike a blow in any great expedition of the children of light against the strongholds of barbarism.

From his "sand-bank in the Baltic" Herder was looking out on a country where the only ray of light seemed to be shed by the fires of war. Since the peace of Westphalia, Germany had been as a kingdom divided against itself; its Reich had become the mere mockery of a name. Bereft, it is said, of a quarter of its population in the Thirty Years' War, it had lain passive, like a blind giant sorely wounded, with vultures tearing its flesh in the shape of "three hundred sovereigns and fifteen hundred princes." The whole people had become ashamed of their German customs and their German tongue. "One is still in France," writes Voltaire from Potsdam, in 1750; "German is never used except to soldiers and horses." But, though "from Frederick's throne the German muse unhonoured went her way," as Schiller sings, it was through Frederick that the German muse became possible. All the three hundred courts might gabble their French, the rude citizens ape the French manners, the learned men deluge the

¹ Heine's *Romantische Schule*, end of book i.

tongue of Luther with French phrases, the king himself might spend his leisure time in writing bad French verse; but, for all this, Rossbach remained a fact, and from Potsdam there went forth no sweet greetings to the Pompadour. On the other side, in spite of Emperors and Pragmatic Sanctions, the land was slowly throwing off the incubus of Austria. The Empire was already regarded as almost a foreign power, and the rest of the nation, thrown in upon itself, began to feel its limbs throbbing with a new strength. Frederick had stirred the hearts of all Germans with a question of common interest; and national life, with all its young vigour and enthusiasm, seemed once more to be awakening from sleep.

But, as became Germans of those days, not in politics chiefly, but in the kingdom of the air, was the change to be accomplished. We must, therefore, visit the chief centres of thought throughout Germany, and see what the intellects of those days were trying to bring about or oppose during the four years that Herder was in Riga, when first he began to blaze like an aurora in the north, making the old men shake their heads at this portent, whilst the heart of youth was set wildly fluttering. Our task will be the easier, because German thought at that time generally took a distinct colour from its place; and certain "schools," with definite characters of their own, such as the Berlin school, the Leipzig school, &c. had gathered round the different centres, especially the universities.

At Leipzig, then, as the old Greek poet began with Zeus, so we will begin with Goethe, though as yet he was but a "lightning fellow" (*blitzender Kerl*), unknown to the many and much ridiculed for his provincial speech and raiment. He had come to Leipzig in 1765, having lived through the woes of separation from Gretchen. Annette was now the heroine of the hour, and he was tormenting her into estrangement by his *Lover's Whims*. With her and his engraving on copper,—making merry with his friends, writing pompous verses full of gods and goddesses, and "metaphor-hunting" in the woods, after the example of Herder's old favourite, Kleist,—his time was

more occupied or wasted than pleased the learned professors. Yet he did not fail to gain what he might from the notable figures of the place, though, indeed, Leipzig had somewhat fallen from its high estate in the last twenty years, owing to the scandalous revolt of the Swiss in Zurich, and the assaults of Lessing, with sentences flashing like Frederick's swords.

Everyone now knows¹ the account of the visit of this young Zeus, still a nurseling as it were in Crete, to old father Saturn Gottsched, once the undisputed king of the German universe, but now meeting a son whom he could not by any means swallow. Everyone must remember the huge bald head, the vast wig swung on with one hand, the servant boxed out of the room with the other, "as at a comedy," and the conversation quietly begun and proceeded with to considerable length, as if nothing had happened. Gottsched was to die within a year, as lonely and with as desperate a cause as his own *Dying Cato*. His *Critical Art of Pottery* still ruled the schools, but since Bodmer turned on him, twenty years before, his fall had been certain, though gradual. In vain had he cried, "Things are as they have ever been; our only duty is to follow the faultless models of the French, according to the rules of right reason and Wolff's philosophy; above all things let us be clear. What do these Swiss mean by their 'imagination?' I know not what manner of a thing it is." In vain had he watered the language till it spread on all sides, like "a deluge of mediocrity," threatening to overwhelm the very elect. In vain had he crowned the false poet Schönaich as a rival to Klopstock. He was forsaken by most of his followers; they would not write for his paper, but started a new thing at Bremen for themselves, even pure-hearted Gellert joining them. He was parodied on the stage by his favourite actress; obliged to read a bitter satire against himself to Brühl at Dresden; and, last of all, even the clever wife of his bosom, to whom he owed so much, turned against him;

¹ *Aus meinem Leben*, book vii. end of the first quarter. Carlyle's *Miscellanies*, vol. iv. p. 161. *Goethe's Works*.

and it is with a start of surprise that we find him still alive, and proceeding with the conversation to Goethe as if nothing had happened. His large wig inspires us with some respect and much pity, for he had done good work in his time, though he could never make out what manner of thing was this "imagination," with its English Milton and other crude barbarities. He had fought hard as a follower of his master, Wolff, for the purity of German speech and literature according to the lights of the French against the inanities of the Silesian school; but when at length he became blind to the time of day we forget his services with a laugh.

But in the moral philosophy lecture-room, crowded to overflowing, there is a thin little figure with trustful blue eyes and thin hollow voice, discoursing of the influence of culture on morality, and much beside, to an audience ever glad to hear and applaud, though now and then a frivolous Frenchman fresh from Voltaire will say, "Let him alone; he's fooling us all."¹ This is Christian Fürchtegott Gellert, the pure of soul, the worshipped one of Leipzig and indeed of Germany, as he sat correcting with copious red ink the themes of his pupils, Goethe's among the rest, or rode out solemnly on his horse, a present from the Kurfürst—Prince Henry's charger, the quadruped that "was astonished at itself"—being now dead.² He was praised by Friedrich himself as "the most reasonable of all German writers," and was the oracle of the Protestant party, consulted by anxious fathers for their sons, by trustful maidens as to their marriage arrangements; a man that bore his faculties meekly, suffering much from sleeplessness and the torment of soul that people in despair for an explanation call hypochondria. It was he who urged the young Goethe before all things to write a good hand, in the hope that thus at least he might acquire something of a style; for the rest, he had been a follower of Gottsched up to a certain point, a firm friend of the two Schlegels, father and

¹ *Aus meinem Leben*, book vii. about three-quarters through.

² Carlyle's *Frederick*, vol. vi. p. 156, and for the whole passage pp. 149-157.

uncle of two more famous brothers, and of Gärtner, Cramer, Rabener, and the other leaders of the *Bremische Beiträge*, to which he long contributed. His fables—no mere translations of Lafontaine, as he asserted with all the indignation that in him lay—were then on everyone's lips, as were his hymns and sacred poems, six of which at least will outlast the world, being put to music by Beethoven, who was born a year after Gellert's death. For, after Herder had left Riga some six months, Leipzig was lamenting over Gellert's decease, and all Germany joined in the mourning, poems and elegies coming in from all the would-be poets of the day, "enough to fill a considerable volume" we are told, so pure-minded and gentle had he been. Thus do the old king and queen, Gottsched and Gellert, the Louis and Marie-Antoinette of Germany, pass away, for their time had come.

In the same house with Gellert, and bound to him in closest friendship, there was dwelling till 1767 a man named Garve, hereafter to be known as a translator of many English works, and especially of Cicero's *De Officiis*, with notes, undertaken at the command of Frederick. He had been at Frankfurt-on-Oder enjoying the lectures of Baumgarten, the celebrated inventor of the word *Æsthetics*, and was now diligently contributing to his friend Weisse's journal, the *Library of Literature*. But in the year mentioned he left Leipzig to comfort his mother in his native Breslau, returning on Gellert's death to occupy his room as professor. In his absence he had acquired that fatal hypochondria, that blighted so many of Germany's best lives at this time. His works on philosophy were much read, being written in a clear and popular style; and, though he himself confesses he was not at home in higher speculation, yet Kant called him a philosopher in the true meaning of the word. He died at the end of the century in the midst of a treatise on *The Invalid's Solitude*, based on copious experience.

One of the central figures of the intermediate period between Gottsched and Goethe was Christian Weisse, editor and dramatist, a radiant, many-sided man, not falling far short of genius. He had come to the university in great poverty, and, purposing

devotion to theology, had sat at the feet of Ernesti, but was led away into other pursuits by his friend Lessing and the bright young circle who started the *Bremische Beiträge*. He almost quarrelled with Lessing about the trouble with the actors that drove Lessing from Leipzig; but in 1759 Nicolai had resigned to him the editing of the famous *Library of Literature and Liberal Arts*. He stood high in Gellert's favour, partly owing to his wife, whom Gellert used to edify of an evening by redelivering to her his lectures on moral philosophy; but it was he who had given the final blow to Gottsched's power by his comedy of *The Devil let loose*, written at Lessing's suggestion; on the other hand, he was exposed to the attacks of Bodmer and his faithful Swiss for the French frivolity of his operettas. At one time he seems to have been haunted by visions of becoming a Shakspeare, or even an Æschylus, for he wrote a *Richard III.*, a *Romeo and Juliet*, and a *Taking of Thebes*; but, failing in this endeavour, he turned to domestic comedy and songs of Amazons and of Tyrtæus, something after the manner of Gleim. Probably it was in songs that his real strength lay, for, whereas his plays disappeared from the stage after a certain space, one still hears drunken echoes of his song, beginning—

“ But for love and but for wine,
Where's the good of living ? ”

To us he is chiefly interesting for the sake of his friends, such as Uz, with whom he corresponded for forty years without personal acquaintance.

Another follower of Gellert, far more devout than Weisse, was young Clodius, over whom Goethe made so merry. He took upon himself to fill up the holes in Gellert's instructions, and, like his master, he was not sparing in red ink; and, at all events, he set Goethe free from the pedantic use of all the gods and goddesses of Olympus and Parnassus, that jostled each other in the fashionable verses of the time. But, finding that in place of the gods and goddesses Clodius flooded the language with pompous words of Latin and Greek after the manner of Ramler,

the *blitzender Kerl* revenged himself by writing a solemn ode to cookery in Clodius's vein on the inn wall, and parodying Clodius's most wearisome of comedies, *Medon, or, the Philosopher's Revenge*, thereby creating no little scandal in Leipzig.¹ One bright point about Clodius is his friendship with Herder's Kleist, the poet of *The Spring*, in happier days among his native mountains that lie towards Bohemia.

Another of the great men of Leipzig with whom the young Goethe was far from satisfied was Ernesti, professor of theology, and interpreter of the Scriptures by a method then new. We need here only notice that since he habitually wrote and thought in Latin, as became a man of learning, he had the greatest difficulty in composing the few German sermons required of his professorship; also, that he carefully avoided all modern literature, and had a contempt for the style of these latter days, and that his daughter, left motherless at her birth, grew up to speak Latin and read Greek.

Before leaving Leipzig we may mention a poor sick figure in the worst straits of poverty and melancholy, who, encouraged by Gottsched, had come to the university, and was supporting himself by writing occasional poems, fables, and satires. Weisse and Gleim took pity on him—sent him to Hamburg as newspaper editor for one thing—but it was too late. His name was Benjamin Michaelis; had but the fates allowed, he too might have been a poet, but black night fluttered round his head, and before he was twenty-seven he went to “Father Gleim” in Halberstadt to die.

In Zurich the founders of the Swiss school, Bodmer and the inseparable Breitinger—Gottsched's first scientific opponents—were still in life and vigour, though their fighting-days lay some fifteen years behind them, and their glory was beginning to pale before the steel-blue star of Lessing. Inseparable though alternate, they were like the Castor and Pollux of old; Bodmer writes his book, and Breitinger makes a preface; Breitinger

¹ *Aus meinem Leben*, book vii. last quarter.

writes his book, and Bodmer makes a preface. Both were natives of Zurich, or its close neighbourhood. Bodmer, as a child, found Latin easier than German; afterwards considered theology, in Switzerland at all events, rather gloomy stuff; travelled in France and Italy, and, meeting with a French translation of Addison's *Spectator*, determined to produce the same kind of thing in Zurich. He produced *Discourses of Painters* accordingly, with Breitinger's help, Gottsched as yet applauding heartily; he also translated *Paradise Lost* and *Hudibras*, being much inclined to English thought and manner. At length the two inseparables hit upon the extraordinary discovery that it might be as well for a poet to have imagination. Gottsched was furious; had he not been a poet all his life, and yet was he not perfectly innocent of imagination? Who were these rebels? And for a season things went hard with the Swiss. But in 1748 the first three cantos of Klopstock's *Messias* appeared in the *Journal of Bremen*, and were received with applause by all Germany in spite of Gottsched's sneers. The triumph of Zurich now began. Klopstock came to Switzerland, and lodged in Bodmer's house; he was succeeded by young Wieland, who had just written a heroic poem on Arminius, and was engaged with Plato, and another "epic" on the Temptation of Abraham. It had been well for the inseparables had they died in the flush of victory, but it entered into Bodmer's head that if Klopstock could write epics on Scripture he might do the same. Accordingly, epic after epic was poured out, beginning with the Flood, the "Noachid," till, about the middle of Herder's period in Riga, nearly the whole of the book of Genesis had appeared as a series of epics by Bodmer's hand—a singular memorial of delusion. Thus, in spite of his wide sympathies and republicanism, in spite of his tragedies (one of them on William Tell), his defence of Milton against Voltaire, and his partial discovery of the Nibelungen Lied, Bodmer, in Goethe's words, remained a child to his life's end.

With Breitinger it did not fare much better, though Goethe tells us he saw the faults of his theories at last, and at all events

he was saved from flooding the world with verse. He wrote a critical art of poetry in opposition to Gottsched's, and made an elaborate comparison between poetry and painting, asserting that their province was the same, and above all things we must have "pictures" in poetry. But pictures are not enough; we must also have something new, and what is so new as the marvellous? But further, all this must conduce to some moral purpose. What kind of poetry then unites the pictorial, the marvellous, and the moral? Surely Æsop's fables, and they alone. Æsop's fables are therefore the highest poetry. With this conclusion Bodmer as usual heartily agreed, but in practice he seems to have contented himself with his epics, fearing perhaps that he had not sufficient loftiness of mind to attempt the higher flights of fable. Strange as it may appear, Gellert, and even the keen-eyed Lessing, were beguiled into fable-writing for a time.

One of the most devoted disciples of the inseparables was Gessner, also of Zurich. Probably nature had intended him for an artist, for from his earliest days his delight was in making waxen figures and landscape painting, but he took to verse-writing, and went to Berlin to see Ramler, who persuaded him to give up metre and produce those monstrosities known as prose poems. Henceforth even his few rhymed songs were printed as though they were prose, "so as not to break the regularity of the page." Returning to Zurich, he wrote a good deal for the journal of Bodmer and Breitinger, and, following the fashion of the time, he produced a *Death of Abel*. But his great triumph was his book of *Idylls*, descriptions of scenery and supposed country life in exclamatory prose, setting forth the tender sufferings of Melida, a young lady brought up in solitude on an island; also the daring of "the first sailor," a fond youth who came to her relief, and other kindred themes: but, above all, accounts of nature as he supposed it was, or rather ought to be. "A Theocritus beyond a doubt," cried the critics; his idylls were translated into English and Italian, and, in France especially, were received with rapturous enthusiasm, so

that for a space all the polite and elegant youth of Europe were ravished with the delight of his gentle tales.

In Zurich at this time there was also another, who must be noticed : a soothing, pious creature, engaged in founding (1768) an Ascetic Company, and peering about into people's faces, we may imagine, to judge what kind of heart lay under them. For this was the once great Lavater, not yet at the height of his greatness, when he was received as a prodigy by the civilised world, and "kept the consciences of half Europe." He had studied much in theology, and had written a book of religious poems ; had visited the great ones of Leipzig and Berlin ; had put the Psalms into rhyme, and made a book on the *Power of Faith and Prayer*, and was now on his way to world-wide greatness, as an impostor quite unconscious of his fraud, till he died with his illusions thick upon him, having met the Frenchman's bullet at the siege of Zurich many years hence.

Westward from Zurich, and a little to the north, lies the village of Brugg, where Zimmermann was sitting apart from his fellows in discontented melancholy, finding his native Brugg far too small a sphere for such a mind as his. Twenty years before, he had studied at Göttingen, and was the favourite of the great Haller himself. He had striven "to live the life of a man whose only wish it was to survive after death," had travelled, married from Göttingen, and settled at Brugg as town doctor, having some real skill and much enthusiasm in physic. But the demons of hypochondria and self-conceit would not let him be, but drove him out into the wilderness, so that he would speak to no man. In 1756 he had begun his famous book on *Solitude*, though it was not to be finished for thirty years. In 1768 he was invited to Hanover as court-physician ; but, rendered more miserable by losses in his family, he at last found the airs of these court ladies, "who had drunk coffee with George II.," bearable no longer, and, having undergone a terrible operation at Berlin with the greatest fortitude, he betook himself to travel. He visited the Goethes in Frankfurt for one thing, and caused them to pity his daughter, who

indeed died soon after of sheer despair at her father's moody ways. The fate of her brother was even worse, for he gradually lost his reason and dragged on through many years of hopeless idiocy. Though he is not a pleasant man to contemplate for all his fame and all the presents from Catherine of Russia, in gratitude for the great book on *Solitude*, yet he has attained his great wish. He does "survive after death," for he it was who killed, or at least failed to cure, the dying Frederick.¹

In Berne, at this time, men could still see the venerable figure of the great Haller, poet and natural-philosopher, who preached sermons when he was four years old, and soon after saved his poems from his burning home as his possessions of highest value. He had known men and manners, had studied at Leyden, and visited the learned in London and Oxford, had botanised through the length and breadth of the Alps, and returned to native Berne to write his great poem, *The Alps*, and botanise further, so that spiteful neighbours asserted he kept a cow in his drawing-room. After Göttingen university was founded, in 1736, he was the shining light of the place for nearly twenty years. La Mettrie, the so-called Materialist, had the impertinence to dedicate his *L'Homme Machine* to him, a compliment indignantly repudiated. He "grasped his lyre" for the last time in 1748 in honour of his Britannic Majesty, probably at the close of the war, and in 1753 retired to a peaceful life in Berne, producing his "1004 letters in all languages," mostly on scientific subjects, as afterwards published. One more beautiful point we may notice about him, that in writing his declared object was "to say much in few words—like the English."

Maupertuis, the "flattener of the earth,"² had died in Basle some ten years before this, and we can now turn to Berlin itself, the true centre of thought in Germany, ever since the Swiss had taught the men of Leipzig.

¹ Carlyle's *Frederick*, vol. vi. p. 690; for further account of Zimmermann see *Ibid.* pp. 497-500.

² Maupertuis died in July 1759; see Carlyle's account, *Frederick*, vol. v. p. 587.

In the great city that lies stretched out upon the sand, in all her dreariness and utility, type of her own thought in those days, we find ourselves in the presence of four men, who are fortunately too great to need much mention. The two Kings of Berlin, Frederick, or "Materialism crowned,"¹ and Nicolai, the bookseller, are at the height of their power, and for the first two years of this period (1765-67) we may see the clear eyes of Lessing himself, as he walks under the Linden with Mendelssohn, the quasi-philosopher, generally known as Moses. The *Laocoon* had appeared in 1766, after Lessing's sudden return from his six years' retreat in Breslau, and was still the talk of all, especially of the young. The next year he was invited to undertake the management of the theatre in Hamburg, and in 1767 he left Berlin and began a new paper, the *Dramaturgie*, in addition to his other work in Hamburg, where, at the end of these four years, he was still hesitating whether to accept the Duke of Braunschweig's invitation for travel in Italy, &c., being fast bound by a lady's spell; a man always lonely at heart, in spite of his radiance and his friend Moses, for he was as one born before due time.

Nicolai may stand for the true type of the Berlin school in all its thin purity. He is now chiefly known as an easy mark for sneers, for as he could not move with the times he appeared to go backwards, as the trees fly past the laughing locomotive. It is bad enough to mistake windmills for giants, but Nicolai "mistook giants for windmills,"² and flouted at them amidst the laughter of a world. But his services had been great, and he is saved from contempt by his abhorrence of exaggeration. He was one of the first to oppose both Gottsched and the Swiss, and founded a journal independent of either party. He most concerns us as the editor of the famous *Letters on Literature*, purporting to be accounts of contemporary literature sent by a friend to a wounded officer during the Seven Years' War. They were started in 1759, by Nicolai, Lessing, and Mendelssohn,

¹ Heine's *Briefe über Deutschland*, book ii., beginning of last third.

² Heine's *Briefe über Deutschland*, book ii. beginning of last third.

and the idea of the wounded officer was suggested to Lessing by the death of his friend Kleist, poet of *The Spring*, at fatal Kunersdorf, as we have already seen.¹ Within the year Lessing departed for Breslau, and Nicolai and Moses continued the work alone, but were afterwards assisted by a young man called Thomas Abbt, whose name we must remember. The *Letters* ceased in 1765, and Nicolai next proceeded to conduct a *General German Library*, which prospered up to a certain point for fifty years. For the rest, Nicolai is only important to us as the leader of the Illumined, who were even called the *Nicolaiten* by such as found little comfort in the Deism and rational utility of the school.

Moses Mendelssohn, the pure-hearted Jew, type of Nathian the Wise, is more interesting as a man, and in some ways more significant of the times. The motto of his life was his famous saying, "Without God, Providence, and immortality, the good things of this world would be merely contemptible," and, acting on this, he published in 1767 his *Phædon, or, the Immortality of the Soul*, in memory of Thomas Abbt, recently deceased. Though he was as rational a Deist as the rest of the school, he maintained every jot and tittle of the Jewish law, naturally regarding Judaism and Deism as one and the same thing at root. Yet he released his people from the dogmatic tyranny of the Talmud, and by his translations of the Scriptures endeavoured to make them Germans as well as Jews, in spite of the bitter hatred dwelling in all true Christian breasts against the people of God. In his other works, Moses may be regarded as the leader of what was called the popular philosophy, which followed no definite system, though it was based on Locke, its main object being clearness of style, so as to be readily understood by the vulgar. In this clear German of his he had written a treatise on the Sublime and Beautiful after the example of Burke, for whom he had much admiration; also a prize essay, in which he defeated Kant, on the grounds of natural theology and morality. On these grounds his position was so firm that Lavater in spite

¹ Carlyle's *Frederick*, vol. v. p. 487.

of all efforts was unable to convert him to Christianity, and one of Mendelssohn's last deeds was to defend Lessing from the accusation of Spinozism, as we shall see hereafter.

In real though not pronounced opposition to this leading Rationalist party, there was in Berlin a clique inclined to a sort of enlightened Pietism. In this we may include Spalding, Sack, Süssmilch, and perhaps Sulzer, a Swiss by birth, chiefly known for his theory of fine arts.¹ Of these, Spalding was the most notable at the time owing to his sermons and his *Thoughts on the Value of the Feelings in Christianity*; he was much admired by Lavater and souls of kindred piety. In 1770 he with Sulzer and Sack formed a commission for the improvement of schools. Süssmilch, who had been one of the party, and had written *The Divine Order*, paying some attention also to political as well as Divine economy, had died in 1767. As to him we need only remember that he had maintained human speech was the direct gift of God, which seemed to Herder too desperate a hypothesis.

Much befriended by this party, there was living at a short distance from Berlin the verse-maker Lange, friend of Pyra, and son of the pietist Lange, who had caused Wolff to be driven from Halle many years before.² It was he who together with Pyra first introduced unrhymed verse into German, following up the singular theory which denied that the very language which is richest in rhyme was capable of rhyming. Being anxious to become another Horace, he changed his wife Dorothy into Doris, whilst he and Pyra became Thyrsis and Damon, as is seen in Pyra's *Songs of Friendship*. But Damon Pyra died, and Lange's edition of Horace with metrical translation was hacked to pieces by Lessing's sword, so that the star of Thyrsis and Doris was now on the wane, though he still devoutly hoped himself a Horace.

¹ Carlyle's *Frederick*, vol. iv. p. 406. "Inclination (of men) rather to good?" said Frederick, shaking his old head, with a sad smile; "Alas, dear Sulzer, I see you don't know that damned race of creatures as I do!"

² Carlyle's *Frederick*, vol. i. p. 623.

But unfortunately in Berlin itself there was a rival Horace, Ramler, the intimate friend of the leaders of thought; a man to whose criticism even Lessing submitted his work. His mother, being determined in her own mind that the world should have a poet now or never, had induced her husband to go with her into the country a certain period before Ramler's birth, under pretence of better health from baths, but in reality that she might be filled with the nightingale's song. The result was that the boy took to Horace from his youth up, and, having been appointed professor of logic at Berlin, proceeded to pour out Horatian lays in the famous journal of Bremen. Unhappily, the nightingale found considerable difficulty in singing at all, and his lays were the result of endless labour, so that some of his friends impertinently doubted if he were a poet, and Goethe, though he praises him with all the magnanimity of genius, is inclined to call him a critic rather. Yet he was generally esteemed a Horace for certain, and his odes, especially those in honour of Friedrich, were much spoken of, though the king himself paid no attention to the praises of his nightingale. He seems to have led an honest and blameless life, and was much lamented when he vanished from the Berlin circle, thirty years after this. His death was celebrated by a remarkable imitation of Mignon's song, then new to the world. The parody begins, *Kennt ihr den Greis*, and has as chorus, *Um ihn, um ihn Klagt dieser Klub, und mit ihm klagt Berlin*,—which proves that Ramler's panegyrist at least was no nightingale.

But at the time with which we have to do, Ramler was busy with the artistic training of the poetess Karschin, a training of very doubtful advantage. Anna Louise Karsch, or "the Karschin," had come to Berlin in 1761 in sore distress, and had been patronized by Gleim, Mendelssohn, and Sulzer, as a genuine poetess of nature, fresh from the sheep and cattle in her native Silesia. The learned world at once saluted her as the modern Sappho, chiefly because she was a woman who wrote verses; for her experience of life and love had been as a cow-girl and as wife of two husbands, both brutal. When she arrived in Berlin

she seems to have been possessed of some real talent, which fast disappeared under Ramler's artistic training; but her odes to the king and poems on religious subjects continued to be admired. As a woman she displayed admirable self-sacrifice, fortitude, and independence; which indeed amounted to boldness when a few years after this she indignantly sent back the two thalers (about six shillings), "Frederick's gift to Germany's poetess." Frederick's successor, being more considerate or less critical, allowed her to build a house for herself free of charge; but, in her haste to pass to fruition, the modern Sappho met her death from the dampness of the plaster.

Turning now from the Sappho and Horace of Berlin we proceed to another school, which equally with the Horatians had its origin in old Hagedorn, who had died at Hamburg eleven years before our period opens. This is the famous Anacreonic school of Halle university, though the three leaders were now there no longer, Gleim being already established in Halberstadt within reach of Halle, Uz in his native Ansbach far to the south in the Nürnberg country, and Götz in Baden. These three some five-and-twenty years before, together with a fourth, who died early, being then students at Halle, and probably much wearied with the Pietistic atmosphere of the place, had put their heads together to produce that kind of poetry which, in Lessing's words, sings "of girls and wine, of wine and girls, of kisses and drinking, of drinking and kisses, and again of wine and girls, and nothing but kisses and drinking." Such being the theme, it occurred to Uz that it would be better to forsake the old German rhymes, which Gottsched had made almost as wearisome as theology, and introduce the Greek measures; thus he set the example of the barbarous experiments which seem to me to have ruined so much of the best work, not only of Klopstock and Schiller, but of Goethe himself. Not content with Anacreon's songs, Gleim and his friends hoped for a time to introduce something of Anacreon's spirit into life itself; and we read with a smile of the cups crowned with flowers, the bottles buried in roses, and the

Bacchic revelries in German churchyards, the stolid villagers looking on. Stranger than all, the poet of the *Messias* himself took some part in the flowery debauchery. But the Anacreonic revival was not a success : it takes more than roses, and wine in a restaurant, and girls existing in phantasy to reproduce the Greek spirit. The Anacreons were bitterly attacked by Lessing, Kant, and Wieland, who was at that time under the religious influence of the Swiss, not for immorality, of which there was little or none, but for sheer inanity, a far more cruel charge to a would-be poet. Uz returned to moral treatises in verse in the style of Pope or Horace. Gleim went to Berlin, and for a time served as private secretary to the old Dessauer during the war, thus gaining inspiration for his grenadier songs, by far his best work, and much admired at one period. "Not only an Anacreon this Gleim, but a Tyrtæus also," cried the astonished critics. After this he had retired to Halberstadt as cathedral secretary, which post he held for fifty peaceful years. He was a man of much mark in Germany, not so much because he was a poet himself, but as a cause that poetry was in others. For the main object of his life was to aid young genius in its struggles, and Halberstadt became a kind of hothouse, where tender plants were carefully sheltered from the storms of life. Almost all the poets of this period owed something to "Father Gleim," and by his enthusiasm for every sign of genius he won the friendship and respect of all the greatest men of Germany. He continued to write verses and novels (the first novels in the country), and produced a famous work called *Halladat*, or the Red Book, a treatise on God and man, intended to be "a book like the Bible."¹ But as Goethe says, "one can't make poetry all day," and Gleim devoted too much of his leisure to that vast and inane correspondence with his numerous friends, in which neither ink, paper, nor mutual admiration was spared.

¹ "I mentioned to him (Heraud) once, that Novalis had said, 'The highest problem of authorship is the writing of a Bible.' 'That is precisely what I am doing,' answered the aspiring unaspiring."—*Carlyle to Emerson*, vol. i. p. 277.

During these years his favourite young poet was Georg Jacobi, for whom his friendship was tender if not passionate. He had been introduced to Gleim by Klotz, and followed faithfully in his master's footsteps till his life's end. Another young client of Klotz was then to be seen in Halle, a passionate unruly man of the name of Bürger, much of a spendthrift, but with the true genius looking out of his eyes, and a brain through which Lenore will soon begin to gallop.

This Klotz, who afterwards brought trouble to Herder, was much renowned for his knowledge of Latin, especially for the elegance of his Latin verses. Göttingen had known him, but, his fame having reached Berlin, Frederick had expressly invited him to his Prussian Halle. He was now editing the paper *Acta Eruditorum*, and publishing his own pamphlets and verses as *Opuscula*; also writing a treatise on coins, all in faultless Latin, in which his pride was great. "Quite a Horace," said everyone; "or perhaps even better than a Horace."

But Halle has other memories beside the echoes of Anacreonic songs, for it was from Halle that the renowned Christian Wolff, champion of the Orthodox, who translated Leibnitz into German, and posed as interpreter of his master's philosophy,—Wolff, famous alike in mathematics and metaphysic, had been driven by the Pietists under order of the unscientific Friedrich Wilhelm. The Pietists, followers of Spener with his work of *Pia Desideria*, had always been strong in Halle, which was indeed founded by their philosopher friend Thomasius in 1694. Wolff had returned with triumph¹ on the accession of the Friedrich, who was willing that "every man should go to heaven his own way"; and since that time the power of the Pietists, "these mystics without imagination,"² had somewhat declined. Yet out of their ranks had arisen one light at least, the great Semler, who now held the chair of theology in Halle.

¹ Carlyle's *Frederick*, vol. iii. p. 14.

² Heine's *Briefe über Deutschland*, book ii.

He had turned from Pietism to Locke and the English deists, and the result is rather confusing, for he prays like a Pietist, and overthrows dogma like a Gibbon. His main teaching was that dogma is of no importance, for that each man has a private religion, and the real object of Christianity is moral improvement. During these years we find him engaged, like Ernesti and David Michaelis, in a free criticism of the Bible and investigations into Church history.

As we have already been at Königsberg, all the schools of thought in Germany flourishing at that time have now been noticed, for the *Hainbund* of Göttingen was still hidden in the future. And indeed Königsberg cannot be called a centre of thought till after the appearance of the *Kritik* in 1781.

A few individual names scattered throughout Germany, generally offshoots of one or other of these schools, must still be mentioned. Such was Baumgarten, who died at Frankfurt-on-Oder in 1762. In his youth in spite of all opposition he had been a devoted disciple of Wolff, and on him he had based his *Logie*, which Kant always continued to use at lecture. It was he who introduced the word *Æsthetics* through the title of his work *Æsthetica*, or the science of beauty, in which he showed himself very discontented with the current criticism. Friedrich invited him to Frankfurt, where the poor man is said to have died daily for nine years owing to ill health and the terrors of war; for Kunersdorf battle was likely to disturb any theories of *Æsthetics*. His brother, a famous theologian of Halle, died four years before him.

At Dresden Rabener was still living, the boasted Swift of Germany, once the cheerfulest of men but now becoming more and more paralytic. He had been at school with Gellert, and afterwards in Leipzig had written for Gottsched's paper, and was among the first contributors to the *Bremische Beiträge* of his friends Gärtner, Cramer, the Schlegels, and the rest. He had begun by a poetical proof that rhyme was insufferable in German, and thenceforward had devoted himself to prose satires, once as widely read as Gellert's fables, but now not so valuable

as his account of the siege of Dresden in 1760,¹ sent to his friend Weisse in Leipsig. For Rabener was living quietly at Dresden when Frederick came storming down upon it with fire and cannon, consuming churches and homes and all Rabener's precious manuscript satires, "to the mighty comfort of the fools of the future," as he says, together with his shirts and collection of wigs, which in his cheerful way he pretends to regret much more.

Rabener is a bright spot amid the pervading moodiness and hypochondria, but in 1771 his cheerfulness and satires ceased in death, and we must go on our way westward past Weimar, as yet of no account among the nations, to Erfurt, where we find Riedel, a young man full of perseverance and energy, now hard at work to reform Erfurt university. He had been a pupil of Klotz in Halle, had written various satires, and was evolving a "theory of fine arts and sciences," in which he tries to show that there is no unalterable rule of taste, but all things vary according to age and climate and individual opinion. He was full of lofty ideals of future greatness, would like to be a second Winckelmann for one thing, and a few years after this he was invited to Vienna with great honour; but he scandalised polite society and the learned by familiarity with his pupils and the habit of smoking tobacco. From tobacco to atheism was but a step; and, being accused of one or both crimes to the pious Maria Theresa, he was dismissed from his office, and for a long time reduced to pitiful estate, till Gluck, the musician, took compassion on his misery. But it was too late, and he died, as so many died, a victim to hypochondria and the gloom of a life that had failed.

North-west from Erfurt is Göttingen, where the university was still young. It was then listening to Kästner, the man of universal knowledge; Michaelis, the interpreter of things oriental; and Virgil's Heyne, whose struggles for life were now almost over; for in 1763 he had succeeded the famous Gessner as professor of eloquence.²

¹ Carlyle's *Frederick*, vol. vi. pp. 22-33.

² Carlyle's *Essay on Heyne, Miscellanies*, vol. ii. p. 74.

Kästner was an importation from Leipzig, where he had followed Gottsched in his youth, contributed to the *Bremische Beiträge*, and was renowned chiefly as a mathematician, though he prided himself that he was not a mere "man of learning," but a wit and a worldling withal. Michaelis had been evolved out of the Pietists of Halle, had come to Göttingen in 1745 as professor of philosophy, and since the departure of his friend Haller had been occupied chiefly with the exploring expeditions that were unveiling the East. Another promising theologian, Heilmann, also from Halle, had died at Göttingen in 1764, to the grief of Germany and of Herder in particular; a man of clear and bold insight, with a free and even poetic style; he had translated Thucydides, and his lectures on Plato and the *Iliad* had made some stir.

Closely connected with Heilmann in Herder's mind was this Thomas Abbt, whom I have already mentioned as a successor of Lessing in the *Letters on Literature*. He died in November 1766, in the little court-town of Bückeburg, not far to the north and west of Göttingen. He first studied at Halle under Baumgarten, the theologian, elder brother of the Æsthetic Baumgarten; but, growing tired of theology owing to the dreary unreality of the pursuit, and being much influenced by Boyle and the French sceptics, and no less by the English school, he accepted an invitation to Frankfurt-on-Oder, where, in the thick of the shrieking horrors of the war, amidst echoes of the cannon thunder of Kunersdorf, he produced his book on *Death for Fatherland*, a word spoken in season for Frederiek and Fatherland. For a few months he was at Berlin in close friendship with Nicolai and with Mendelssohn, who had to bring together all the metaphysics within his reach to fortify himself against this fearless and clear-headed inquirer. After some time spent in travelling he was invited to Bückeburg by the Duke, a strange man whom we shall meet again, but he had not been there a year when he died suddenly at the age of twenty-eight, with fame and powers daily increasing. His great work was a treatise *On Merit*, in which he discusses the duties of the various

classes that go to make up a complex constitution. Speaking to authors he urges them above all things to write for the common people.

“ Out of the twenty million souls in Germany,” he says, “ only some eighty thousand read the very wittiest of our productions. Literature has become a thing of caste, and the mass of the nation can find no interest in it, but are forced to limit themselves to their Bible and the edifying works on Christianity of a hundred years ago, books that are by no means to be laughed at, for in them the people have found comfort from generation to generation for their miseries in this life, and thus they generally form part of a wife’s dowry, and are read in the evenings by our working-men, who naturally refuse to expend a farthing on the writings of the learned.”

Abbt’s contempt for the “ mere man of learning,” who refuses to take part in the struggle of contemporary life, is very marked ; and no doubt this was the point which most attracted Herder, and, if for this alone, Abbt well deserved the memorials that were raised to him in Herder’s *Torso* and the *Phædon* of Mendelssohn.

Due west, past Minden from Bückeburg, we find in Osnabrück the heroic figure of Möser, practically governing his little state, as a state is seldom governed, till his Britannic Majesty’s second son should come to full age. In his youth his father kept him hidden in the country, lest Friedrich Wilhelm should draft him off into the regiment of giants. After that he had visited Jena and Göttingen, and was of much service to his state in the Seven Years’ War, being even sent to London for nearly a year to arrange terms of peace, &c. For he, like Abbt, hated the man of learning, and devoted his life to the management of his small charge, as greater was not given him. Yet he was now at work upon his history of Osnabrück, which a few years afterwards kindled such enthusiasm in Goethe and the German world for its lofty patriotism, its freedom, and depth of thought. He remained through life a very complete

and healthy man, quite free from all the common sentimentalities and hypochondria.

To the south-west, in Duisberg, by the Rhine country, was a physician named Wittthof, who wrote didactic poems, and was admired by Herder at intervals throughout life as the successor of Haller.

In Brunswick, at this time, we find four men of some distinction. In the *Collegium Karolinum* of that town there were three professors—Gärtner, Zachariä, and Konrad Schmid—who had run through the course of life nearly side by side. Gärtner had been at school with Gellert and Rabener, and then, proceeding to Leipzig, he had served Gottsched for a time; but, after gathering round him a circle of intelligent young men, amongst whom were Zachariä and Schmid, he raised the standard of rebellion in the famous journal which, as it was printed at Bremen, was known as the *Bremische Beiträge*. Schmid afterwards took to writing hymns and songs on sacred subjects, such as “the birth of the Saviour, with Latin paraphrases”; and Zachariä, who was the greatest of the three, wrote satires, especially on the students of Jena, and mock heroics in imitation of Pope. Also at the head of this *Collegium* was stationed, as curator, a peaceful old divine named Jerusalem, once famous for his “enlightened” piety, his depth of thought and purity of style, now immortal, because his much-loved son shot himself, and crystallised the ideas floating vaguely in Goethe’s mind into the form of *Werther*.

Next, passing through Mecklenburg to the north, where a youth named Voss, afterwards the founder of the Göttingen *Hainbund*, or League of Poets, and famous in many other ways, was now a private tutor in a family, we arrive at Copenhagen. Here were two poets of the old school, Cramer and Gerstenberg; both had been in Leipzig, and had known Gellert and Weisse; both had taken part in the *Bremische Beiträge*. Cramer was now court preacher, and was much a favourite in society, especially with women, being a man of great cheerfulness and

courtesy, with some knowledge of the world, though to the end he remained true to the old forms of Lutheranism. Gerstenberg was now editing a literary journal in imitation of the great *Literaturbriefe* of Berlin. He had written dramas and sung of love and war with some success, having, indeed, had some experience in war against the Russians.

Both these two were on terms of close friendship with the first poet of the new school, the pure-hearted Klopstock, who, throughout this time, was living quietly at the court of Copenhagen, where his beloved Margaretha, the "Meta" of the *Odes*, had died in 1763. The first cantos of his *Messias*, which had appeared in 1748 in the *Bremische Beiträge*, were received with much enthusiasm by all but Gottsched; the Swiss were delighted to point to a living example of their theories, and even the common people read him gladly, for his subject exactly coincided with the religious feeling of the times. Imitations arose on all sides, especially in Zurich, as we have seen; and Klopstock was himself his worst imitator in the later cantos of the *Messias*, which was not finished till 1773, and in his Biblical tragedies. His *Odes*, generally written in Horatian metres, turn for the most part on religious themes, and were as popular as the *Messias*, Goethe and his sister storming at each other in rivalry of alternate passages.¹ Klopstock had next, under the guidance of Young and Richardson, passed through a stage of sentimental melancholy, till, in 1764, the first translation of Ossian appeared in Hamburg, and Klopstock threw aside all classic legends and much of his orientalism, and began to discourse on bards and heroes, and all the misty mythology of the North. Hermann and the German forests were the idols of the hour, and the mistletoe of the Druids took the place of the classic laurel. Klopstock's enthusiasm for the burly personages of northern story was increased by his admiration of strength of body and athletic skill, and it might be doubted whether his *Odes* and elaborate theories on skating have not done more for

¹ *Aus meinem Leben*, book ii. end.

the benefit of his country than the *Messias*, the rest of the *Odes*, and all “the Bards,” put together.

But Klopstock, like Lessing, is too great to need further mention, and in Stuttgart to the south was living a very different man from the poet of the *Messias*, though he was really working at the same task. Johann Jacob von Möser, remarkable even amongst Germans for the vast amount of his writings, is one of the noblest figures of the time. With a Quixotic enthusiasm he devoted his life to the vindication of the rights of the people against the oppression of the petty courts. For fifty years he laboured at the history of the laws of Germany and the liberties of subjects. Nor were his politics confined to theory; at Tübingen, Frankfurt-on-Oder, Homburg, Vienna, and Stuttgart, he had held positions of high authority in the universities of the learned and the ministries of princes. But this man, in whose eyes “right was right, and wrong wrong,” was not long in offending the authorities wherever he went; his life was one persecution; his writings were altered or suppressed by the censorship; his counsels were rejected; for five years he lay in prison; his son Friedrich Karl, who followed his father’s steps, met with the same fate; nothing could daunt him; he was a Don Quixote that was never ruined by a cure, but went down to his grave still maintaining that “right was right and wrong was wrong,” whatever all the crowns in Europe might say.

Closely connected with Möser in his government of Homburg was a man called Creuz, poet and politician, still managing the affairs of Homburg during these years, especially in its disputes with neighbouring Darmstadt, where in 1770 the younger Möser became prime minister. Creuz, too, had been in prison, and had written several poems of no high merit, such as *Seneca*, a tragedy, and *The Graves*, an imitation of Young’s *Night Thoughts*, containing dissertations on the Last Day, immortality, the certainty of death, and the rest, and concluding by “consolations” to man that not he alone but all the world is appointed for destruction.

In this Wurtemberg country too, at Marbach, was a boy

named Friedrich Schiller, now attending the village-school, and climbing the trees in the storm "to see where the thunder came from"; and in Biberach, further to the south, was Wieland, who had returned from Zurich in 1760, had written his *Agathon*, and translated Shakespeare, though too much in the French style, and was now engaged on his *Musarion*, all of these very different in tone from his "seraphic poems" and the *Tempted Abraham*, composed under pious Bodmer's care in Switzerland so few years before. After a glance at Baireuth, where in 1763 Jean Paul had begun his bright journey through the world, we will turn, as all Germany turned, with a thrill of horror to Trieste, where, in the June of 1768, Winckelmann was lying murdered in his chamber. Thus with a hero our catalogue ends.

In the Homeric battles the leaders come rushing on with cries and prayers for the fight amid the rattle and gleam of brazen arms, and behind them tramples the vast and nameless host that die for their cause unwept and unremembered. And far away in Greece the main body of the nation is gathering in the corn and pruning the vines from year to year, knowing not and caring little how their brethren may fare. So too in Germany, the leaders went forth to their battle in the air with clashing phrases and gleaming strokes, in front of a vast and nameless host, who were content to follow at a distance, and generally stood watching while the leaders laid on. But the great mass of the people staying at home cared for none of these things, but earned their living, in spite of oppression, from year to year, reading their Luther's Bible and Arndt's *Christianity*, completely cut off from other delights of the intellect, and when they had sung their hymns they all went out into the churchyard. Poetry, which is a people's life, had become a thing of the courts and the universities, and we have seen in what strange fashion it flourished. Everyone, down to the very mothers of children, was longing for the bread of poetry, and for bread they were given the stones of the moralists and the scorpions of the Horatians. The learned men had lost themselves in the solitary deserts of selfishness, and, being blinded with the dust

of conceit and burnt up with the glare of introspection, they laid them down in hopeless melancholy, for they had forgotten that knowledge is nothing unless it lead to life, and that a wise man cut off from his own people is as futile as a gate in the midst of a flood. But on this blind chaos of Germany the spirit of criticism was beginning to move; the tops of the parched trees were rustling as with a sound of much rain, and for this once out of criticism was to come some good thing. To what shall we compare this nation? It was like a band of children that have lost their way in one of Germany's own forests: a pleasant place by day, but now the night was coming, and strange shapes began to arise on every hand, and dreary voices to sigh among the pines. This way and that the children searched for a path, and one cried, "Lo, here," and another "Lo, there." At length one named Herder called to the rest and said: "If we cannot escape from this forest as other children have escaped, let us at least keep together, that so, having comfort one of another, we may abide in trust and hope, till the day dawn and the horror of night is departed."

CHAPTER VI.

FIRST FRUITS, 1766—1769.

“God has conceded two sights to a man;
 One of men’s whole work, Time’s completed plan,
 The other of the minute’s work, man’s first
 Step to the plan’s completeness.”—SORDELLO.

WHILST still in Königsberg, as we have seen, Herder had gained a wide knowledge of all contemporary literature in Germany, and of the leading writers in England and France; he had also begun to draw up short essays or schemes for treatises on his own account, and this practice was continued during the first years in Riga. The titles of these essays are sufficient to show that from the very first his mind turned naturally towards the paths which he was to follow through life. They treat of the Beauty of Man, the French and German stage, the Ode or Lyric (“that first-born son of passion,” as he calls it, “the fountain-head of poetry, now extinct among us, for we only borrow the relics of the ancients”), of the *History of Poetry*, especially of the *Song*, and of Taste, especially Gothic, then called *Barbarous*, and the possibility of making Philosophy serviceable to the common people. Ever since the *Literaturbriefe* of Nicolai and Mendelssohn came to an end, Herder had intended to publish a series of essays, partly to supplement, partly to criticise, the judgments of this famous journal. At length, stimulated to the sticking-point by Hamann, in the autumn of 1766 he published two parts or collections, under the name of *Fragments on the new German Literature*, and a third part appeared at Easter in the following year. His choice of the

title is a curious instance of what it is fashionable to call the irony of fate ; for it is a feature in Herder, as sad as characteristic, that to his life's end all his greatest undertakings remained fragments. Even these first *Fragments* were never finished, but want their fourth and completing part, remaining, as his enemies said, "a fragment of a fragment." Closely connected with this in origin from some mental deficiency, is another failing, very noticeable in his first work. For, when a second edition was called for, the first having been eagerly bought up in a few months, Herder thought it necessary to re-write the first part entirely on quite a different plan, and to make considerable alterations in the second part. He was never satisfied with his own work ; could never be sure that he had once for all thrown it into the most artistic shape possible for him, and might now stand at a distance, and watch it as a thing complete. Like an uncertain painter, who too long loves his picture as his child, he was continually driven to add a touch here and a touch there, working about it and about, generally with some loss of vigour ; for the goddess of wisdom was not born as a common child is born, but quick and armed in panoply.

The final edition of the first collection of *Fragments* treats of language in general, of German, and of the growth of various languages through different periods.

Language is the instrument of knowledge, and, as thought is probably impossible without language, it is also the limitation of knowledge. A nation that speaks a poor and mean language cannot produce great poets or philosophers. It is impossible to translate Homer into Dutch, or Aristotle into the tongue of savages. But language is not only the instrument of thought, it is also the result ; for a language is the monument of the development in a nation's life from century to century ; it is a garden full of flowers, planted by many a thoughtful mind. Language and thought are therefore inseparably dependent, and every nation speaks according to its thought and thinks according to its speech. The prize essay of Michaelis on language, in spite of its learning and the interest of its examples, cannot compare for depth of thought with the writings of the author of the *Crusades* (Hamann), "though the editors of the *Literaturbriefe* may well jeer at him, for they play with the shells and miss the kernel."

Turning now to German in particular, what man amongst us, Herder asks, will explain to us its history and show us its beauty? Who will take the cloud from our eyes? I cannot attempt so much, but I offer my *Fragments* as a handful of flowers gathered as I went my way through the varied fields of our tongue; not sought out with spectacles on nose and face red with stooping, but plucked as they smiled up at me from their place. The German language is original and self-developed, and might still be maintained in its purity were it not for our men of learning; it is a Gothic palace for a Gothic people, and we must not be ashamed when our neighbours call it barbarous, for it was never intended to progress as a tumbler, but to stride with dignity like a German; it is a brave speech, like the people who speak it, and is only terrible to cowards. Its double consonants give it strength, its vowels and diphthongs variety, and its aspirates the softness and delicacy of a lover's sigh. Owing to the natural measure of our syllables our verse is inclined to move with firm and steady tread rather than to bounce and jump in dactyl and anapæst. Klopstock has shown us what may be done with a free metre; in Kleist and Gleim we see how well the English or Miltonic measure suits the music and harmony of the German tongue. Let us not fear to restore the strong and sonorous words of the olden time banished by Gottsched and his followers, who have done more harm than any other party to the genius of our language, and were only just opposed in time by the patriotic Bodmer. And we must not be annoyed when foreigners laugh at our inversions, for they give much point and emphasis to expression; and, above all, let us abide by our idioms, which are the real beauties of a language and the index of a nation's growth, so that without idioms humour is impossible, and it is owing to our imitation of "classical" models that we have no humourists, for even Rabener is far below Swift. We have aped other nations till "imitator" has become a nickname inseparably attached to a German writer, taking from us "the pith and marrow of our attribute," and our style is so flat and wearisome that the reading public has shrunk to a few journalists, who have no time to think, but plenty to write reviews.

Next Herder mentions, with short criticisms, the writers whom he considers the best in Germany, namely, Winckelmann, Hagedorn, Möser, Abbt, Spalding, Mendelssohn, Lessing, and Hamann. Not one of these will he insult by the name of "classic." Every one, he cries, talks in praise of a "classic" writer, but what does it really mean? Be true, my children, and let who will be "classic."

Turning now from German, Herder traces the growth of

language, going especially to Greek for his examples, as being the finest of tongues and the most independent in development.

The history of a language is as the history of a man from the lisping of childhood, through the passion and music of youth to the calm wisdom of age. How tempting it is, and yet how vain, to peer with the imagination into primæval time and search for the origin of such a thing as speech. The hypothesis of Süßmilch that speech was a direct gift of the Deity is contrary to all analogy, and destroys the wonderful unity of Nature; for everything grows or develops, and nothing is made perfect at once. Language has grown like a tree from some small seed, and man is the author of his own speech. In the childhood of man, whilst men were still half beasts (*Thiermenschen*), soon after, according to the fables, men and beasts ceased to understand each other, speech was a song or poetry full of pictures and images. We see remains of this period in the utterances of the oracles and the poems of Homer. The first authors in every nation are poets, and these poets are inimitable. Our speech is no longer a song, as Homer's was; in vain do we imitate him, taking for metre the hexameters of Klopstock. Homer is used as an example here, because the songs of the Druids and Bards are mostly lost. With the introduction of writing and the growth of political life prose became possible, singing ceased, and poetry was made a thing of art; instead of Homer we have Tyrteus and the great tragedians, closely followed by the historians; for prose was the living language, till finally it reached its perfection in Plato. But, in strict philosophy, little or no ornament must be allowed; every thing must be short and straight to the point, as we see in Baumgarten's metaphysics, and we have no right to complain if we find the style of philosophy as dry and uniform as algebra, for Truth is best naked, even though it do not please the eye of women. Yet, as we are men before we are philosophers, it is essential that a philosopher write in his mother tongue with all the wonderful associations which he has sucked in with the milk of childhood. Philosophy should lead out from common life without a break, and not transplant us on a sudden into a region of strange speech and thought. Sulzer's plan for purifying the language by excluding all synonyms and superfluities does not necessarily help the philosopher, whilst it destroys poetry. Something may be gained by translations of the best models, and even the introduction of good words, but great care must be taken lest in this way the virgin purity of a language be lost.

With the questions of more particular detail with which Herder closes the first collection of the *Fragments*, criticising

an article by Abbt in the *Literaturbriefe*, we English can have no further interest.

The second part begins with a sigh for the golden age, when as yet there was no criticism, but man was content to think for himself without learning what other people had thought; and then a picture of the true critic is introduced, the guide of the reader, the friend and judge of the author, the architect of literature, contrasted with the false critic as he was to be found in so many German journals, "those fashionable maladies of our time."

But why is it, Herder goes on, that in spite of all criticism the Germans have no originality, no true genius? They stand looking at each other and do nothing; they pride themselves on their imitations; but Apollo is still angry with them, and declares them "neither third nor fourth" in the race. Let us consider what they imitate and how it is that in spite of all imitation they are so grievous a failure. Many of our best poems are based on the oriental, but our poets forget that David and Job did not sing under a sky or amid a landscape like ours, and the consequence is that the lamb and the tiger, Jordan and the Rhine, get mixed up in very quaint confusion; our whole nationality, too, is different, and, though Voltaire goes too far in regretting that "a stupid little people in an obscure corner of the earth has been so high exalted," yet it is ridiculous for Cramer and Zachariä to sing our national thanksgivings in the style of Miriam by the Red Sea, and for our other poets to cram their verses with oriental metaphors and mythology, which is indeed contrary to the whole tone of Christian religion, so that even Klopstock's *Christian Psalms* are often wearisome if not absurd. Our whole manner of life is distinct, and it would be much more profitable to explain the spirit of the oriental poems than to imitate them. Taking the *Messias* as the best example of this oriental manner, it is much to be regretted that Klopstock met with so much praise and blind imitation at first, for it has weakened the rest of his work; and the *Messias* itself is not out of reach of criticism, as may be seen from an imaginary conversation here introduced between a Rabbi and a Christian.

Turning now to the more glorious land of Hellas, how far can the Germans be said really to know the Greeks whom they imitate? At least they are better in this than the French, who deck Homer out in their own fashions or laugh at him as a barbarian; whereas the Germans, who have no public, no fatherland, are content to see him as he is. Yet where is another Winckelmann who will open to us the temple of Greek wisdom

and poetry as well as art? At all events our imitations are merely failures. It is absurd to mention Bodmer and Homer in the same breath, though *Noah* is a worthy and moral old man. Klopstock, again, really is more akin to Virgil, and the only German who can compare to Homer in influence on daily life is Gellert with his *Fables*, though this comparison is absurd enough. Still less can we hope to imitate the dithyrambic poems, that had their origin in mad enthusiasm and religious drunkenness; our dithyrambs are evolved without Bacchus, without the dance, without inspiration, and those who make them—such as Uz, Weisse, Gerstenberg, and Schmidt—are worthy boon companions, who have perversely given themselves a wrong name. Our Anacreons do not succeed much better in their imitation, though Gleim has something of the true grace, and by his Grenadier songs, so full of true German strength and humour, has done more for his country than ever Tyrtaeus did. On the other hand Gessner with his *Idylls* falls far below Theocritus; he has improved Nature till it has lost all interest; he has mixed sugar with the Pierian spring; he has polished down his passions till they are no more passionate. What have we to do with these innocent shepherds that have ceased to be men, and trip about as meaningless gods in an age called of gold? Far otherwise is it with Theocritus; he has originality and passion, the two essentials of poetry, that are completely wanting in Gessner. Still more absurd is the comparison between the Karschin and Sappho. To her we might say, as Sappho said to her maid, “Thou hast never gathered roses on Pierian hills, where the Muses and Graces have their haunt.”

The third collection of *Fragments* is chiefly occupied with the pernicious influence of Latin on modern literature.

Latin was from the first the enemy of German, and we might have resisted it had it not been for Charlemagne and the monks, who opened upon us the barbarous deluge of Latin literature, Latin religion, and Latin speculation. Had we but been an island like England! Luther set free our thought, and tried to restore the language, but it again fell into Latin forms, and was flooded by French phrases in hopes to make it polite. Gottsched did much to oppose this, but still treated it from a Latin point of view. German has not yet become the sublime Gothic building that Luther planned. Latin, being considered an end in itself, is ruining our education also, for it sucks the brains of youth dry and turns our men of genius into hopeless pedants, thwarting our knowledge and laying its limits on science itself.

Since men left off communicating their ideas by signs and pantomime and inarticulate noises like other animals, speech and thought have gradually become so closely connected that they are now as inseparable as

the skin and the body. Common men and unlearned women find it impossible to throw their thoughts into different words; hence the rapidity, the natural directness, the naïve beauty of their conversation. Men of learning have become slaves to outlandish phrases, which they must shake off unless they would appear ridiculous. We are already beginning to laugh at the courtly old dame who says, "My feet (by your good leave)," or "The street is (*salva venia*) dirty"; and some day we shall laugh at the absurdities of the learned. The common man reads little, for what little is written for him is so full of bookish wit and learning that he cannot comprehend it. Our children's books are evidently written for their torment. Our women, whose education is all-important, are bored to death by learned follies. Our poets, instead of singing like the poets of old, in the natural speech of mankind, go searching about for dead expressions and quaint artifices; for they have forgotten that in poetry expression and thought must be in closer unity than two lovers embraced, closer than skin and flesh, being related as the body and soul in Plato. Then only can we feel the joy in poetry that a Winckelmann feels in the Apollo. It is impossible for a poet to attain this perfection in any language but his own. Imagine Shakespeare writing in a dead language! What would the real Horace say if he were set to read such poets as Klotz, or the work of any of our Latin pedants? We sacrifice everything to that accursed word "classical." We must begin our reform by giving up Latin, not as a learned tongue, but as a means of artistic expression and a test of culture.

In philosophy, on the other hand, we must never lose sight of the thought in the covering of words, otherwise we become entangled in that labyrinth from which Bacon, Locke, and Leibnitz tried to set us free. We may know everything that philosophers have said, and yet, unless we have made the thought our own and part of our life, we are not philosophers. For philosophy does not play with words as arithmetic with signs; and a true philosopher is as rare as a true poet, though many know all about philosophy and poetry. The ultimate elements or conditions of knowledge are time, space, and force or cause; and it is the office of philosophy to analyse all thought into terms of these, and to set it free from the trammels of arbitrary expression, such as the Latin phrases which from continual use have come to be regarded as more important than the thought which they originally expressed. As to mythology in poetry, it may be used sometimes in fables and even in certain odes, but with the greatest circumspection, and never as an end in itself, nor as a display of learning. The old gods are on the whole better than abstract qualities with capital letters proposed by Klotz,—such as Shame, Fear, Envy, and the rest.

✓ Herder next passes in review, with comments generally rather favourable, the imitators of Horace and Lucretius, concluding with an eloquent description of the real office of a poet, "who begins where the philosopher leaves off"; who sweeps every chord of the human heart and shows us the soul of man in all its beauty and terror; "for the only thing that moves us is a picture of ourselves." Then follows a treatise on the Elegy from the *Literaturbriefe*, with notes by Herder, one of which is worth quoting as a sign of what was to come after.

I have never read Young's *Elegies* or Creuz's *Graves* in so suitable a frame of mind as of summer nights under a starry sky in the silent bowers of a garden that lay near a churchyard, where the ancient holy lime-trees, inspired by the breath of night, whispered a solemn awe to the soul, and from the far-off ruins of a crumbling feudal castle, or from their dwelling in the old Gothic church tower, the owls of wisdom now and again uttered their hollow note.

After a discussion of various other questions, such as pulpit oratory, that do not now interest us, the *Fragments* come to an end.

Soon after the first part of the *Fragments* was published news of Abbt's death reached Herder, and filled him with sorrow. "The loss of Abbt is irreparable," he writes to Nicolai; and indeed at this period there was no German writer with whom Herder could more completely sympathise. He determined to write a memorial in honour of Abbt, Baumgarten, and Heilmann; but, though he set to work upon Baumgarten, and went some way with his original scheme, the memorial in its final form, as published early in 1768, under the title of *The Torso*, was in honour of Abbt alone, and even then was not complete. Herder begins with the difficulty of biography in general, the impossibility of knowing the depths of any human soul, and the vast difference between the life of a writer and his works; between thought and action.

How hard it is to catch the exact moment when the soul unveils itself in fullest beauty, when we may embrace the thought of a fellow man, and, as it were, learn wisdom by a kiss. In the ordinary reviews and

journals we run through a few extracts ; we read criticisms, and learn to find errors rather than beauties ; and thus we seem clever, but are far enough from becoming sons of wisdom. An author depends on the world around him and the world of the past ; he bears the chains of his age, and must be judged accordingly.

Turning now to Abbt, Herder, as might be conjectured, sings his praises above all because he was not a mere man of learning, born and bred among books, but a man among common men, whose great object was to spread wisdom among the people according to "plain good sense" (this in English) ; "the consequence was, that, in exchange for a single chapter by Abbt, we would gladly give a hundred scholarly works, three new Pindars, and a score or two of new Anacreons."

After forming his style on Sallust and Tacitus, Voltaire and the English, Abbt had acquired just that sharp and terse way, so rare in German ; "any one who blames this style may be condemned to read all the weekly journals in order, as they are published in Halle." The extracts in the *Fragments* were mostly taken from Abbt's contributions to the *Literaturbriefe*. As a patriot he would not suffer German to be weakened by an admixture of French, or too close an imitation of the English ; as a man he would not suffer himself to be ruined by a life of learned leisure at a university. It is true that under the influence of the French he forsook theology, but he constantly turns to religion for his themes, and is a surprise to those who are ignorant how much of true religion may exist quite apart from a priesthood.

To any one who can read between the lines in the *Torso* it is evident that Herder is drawing rather an ideal of himself than a portrait of Abbt. He regards Abbt as a sort of happy warrior, who was all that Herder wished to be, taking him, as most of us take some one, for the embodiment of the better side of his own nature, free from the slips and failings of his every-day personality. For we like to have some clear type for our example and satisfaction, and few can be sure of themselves.

Even within the year we find Herder giving way to more anger, not to say petulance, than beseems a happy warrior. For we have now come to his sharp contest with Klotz of Halle, and the followers of Klotz, chief of whom was Riedel, the

tobacco-smoker of Erfurt. The first edition of the *Fragments* was received with enthusiasm by all the best minds in Germany. They were anonymous, and Herder was particularly anxious that all his writings should remain anonymous, till he had produced a book worthy of himself. But Kanter let the secret out in Königsberg, and Herder was soon overwhelmed by letters of admiration from Nicolai, Gleim, Scheffner, Lavater, and, finally, Kant and Lessing. Even Winckelmann, as we have seen, asked what young Pindar had appeared in the north. Mendelssohn wrote a review of the *Fragments* for his journal, but it was kept back till the second edition should appear, and was never published. Klotz reviewed the work in the most elegant Latin, and even wrote to Herder with some praise; for, in fact, Herder had been so careful not to offend Klotz, that Hamann accused him of writing against his conscience. The one thing at which nearly everyone took offence was the style, which seemed overloaded with metaphors and quaint with "Hamann's cant," as the critics called it; for, under the influence chiefly of Sterne, though no doubt of Hamann as well, Herder had set the old rules of prosody at defiance, and overleaped the steady-going periods of the learned. It was to this point that the school of Klotz turned for their vengeance. The change from apparent indifference to bitterest hostility was gradual, but when a review by Herder appeared in Nicolai's *Journal*, refusing Klotz's *Poems* any higher position than the third class, war was declared in a new journal started at Halle by Klotz himself. The *Fragments* were freely abused, and the wish of the author to remain anonymous was not respected, in spite of Herder's protests to Klotz himself. Petty details of personality were even added, and Herder's vexation was extreme. He thought of replying to "this Latin Gottsched" by a poem in the style of the *Dunciad*, but wisely gave up the idea, for he was almost too earnest to succeed in witty satire. The *Torso* was next attacked, and the final blow was a criticism by Riedel of Erfurt on the second edition of the *Fragments*, before it was even published.

Herder, who was at work on the completion of the *Fragments*

and the *Torso*, at once gave up everything, and determined to avenge himself on his tormentors by a series of essays, in which he imagines himself walking at random through groves of criticism (*Kritische Wälder*). There are four parts, or "Groves," in this work: the two first were written in the autumn of 1768, after the news of Winckelmann's murder, and were published early in 1769; the third a few months later; the fourth was never published till after Herder's death, for he had become tired of polemical controversy that profits not.

The first is devoted to a consideration of Lessing's *Laocoon*, and no doubt contains much that was intended for the continuation of the *Fragments*. Herder's object in including this among the "Groves" was probably to secure the powerful alliance of Lessing, who had himself just declared war against Klotz. Herder's admiration for Lessing was naturally profound. When the *Laocoon* appeared he read it through three times in succession in one afternoon and evening; and yet in this first *Wäldchen* he is inclined to agree with Winckelmann rather, when there is any difference between the two; for Winckelmann had been gathered up into the ideal, but Lessing was still a mortal, and some of his conclusions are treated with a criticism far from servile. Herder contradicts his theory as to the expression of the emotions among the Greeks, maintaining that Philocrates does not shriek without restraint; also as to the cloud of invisibility in Homer, which, according to Herder, was a real cloud of miracle; as to the ugliness of Thersites, and other points that are of much interest to the scholar and of some to most people. But the one criticism of real importance is Herder's expostulation against Lessing's dogma that all poetry must represent action, which practically limits poetry to epic and the drama. It is a paradox that was useful in its day when poetry was flooded with endless description, washy odes, and good advice. But must we therefore, asks Herder, give up the lyric and the song, the language of passion and emotion, the first utterance of nature herself? No wonder this seemed a hard saying to the man

who, even in Shakespeare, found most delight in the soliloquies and the parts that approach the lyrical.

This first *Wäldehen* on the *Laocoon* was immediately followed by the two against Klotz, "those useless, rude, and pitiful treatises," as Herder himself soon came to call them; for indeed he was of too sensitive, perhaps too irritable, a nature ever to attain that perfect mastery of the sword which was given to Swift and Lessing. Assured of the justice of his cause he lost self-restraint, forgetting that, unless the decision is left to time, justice has very little to do with success. Klotz is extinct now, and would have been extinct though Herder had never wagged a finger against him. Lessing was ever a fighter, and the joy of conflict recompensed him for the annoyance and pettiness of the foe; but with Herder every stroke of the enemy was as a dagger in his flesh, and when victory came he was weary and sick at heart. Yet it was the cause, and all personal questions were kept at a distance, though it may be doubted whether Herder would not have spent his time better in writing a good book rather than abusing a bad one.

He begins with an examination of Klotz's *Letters on Homer*, and shows how completely beside the mark they were in their praise and blame. For Klotz, according to the current criticism of those times, had taken upon himself to say "this is good," or "that is bad," as though Homer had made his poems to please a pedant of modern Europe, and not to be the glory of the singers of Greece.

But, says Herder, what is each man apart from his time? In order to praise or blame Homer, "I must be ready to become an Arab with the Arabs, a Hebrew with the Hebrews, a Scald with the Scalds, a Bard with the Bards; I must enter into the spirit of Moses, and Job, and Ossian, according to their time and nature."

The rest of the first part is occupied with various small questions of scholarship and taste, such as the use of mythology in modern poetry—in which Herder defends Milton, and the

propriety of representing "the Christian God" in a chariot of thunder; all of which has become of comparatively small interest to us now. But the second section, in which Herder jeers at an essay of Klotz on the Purity of Virgil, contains some truths of criticism, which have only within the last few years finally established themselves in England.

A poet like Virgil must be judged as a poet and not as a guardian-angel of the seventh commandment. A critic must be a judge of art, not a judge of morality; it is not his part to publish a long and learned dissertation whether a poet's muse is a maiden pure and undefiled or not; that should be left to her great-aunts and other pious old women, of whom there cannot fail to be plenty to delight in such a business. Herder goes on to show what diverse ideas of purity have been fashionable among the nations, and how great a part of modesty is conventional, and becomes a nuisance, if we allow it to interfere with our appreciation of the beautiful. ✓

After an onslaught against Klotz's commentaries on Horace and his imitations, we come to the third *Wäldchen*, which criticises Klotz's work on coins. In this Herder shows the folly of display of so-called "taste" in such things as coins, apart from the great principles of the history of nations and the growth of beauty; for coins, like other works of art, are merely the outcome of the spirit of man, and lose half their significance in isolation. He proves, too, that Klotz had borrowed most of his book, and concludes the volume by several other instances of his enemy's superficial and partial judgment. ✓

It is a relief to turn from the criticisms on Klotz—that have come to look so trivial and unnecessary—to the fourth *Wäldchen*, though the origin of this, too, is polemical. Riedel of Erfurt, a warm adherent of Klotz, had written, as we saw in the last chapter, a *Theory of the Fine Arts*, which, in fact, was little else than a series of extracts from other writers on the subject, beginning with Leibnitz, Burke, Home, Webb, Hagedorn, Baumgarten, and Lessing, down even to Herder's *Fragments*. Not only, according to Herder, had Riedel utterly failed to comprehend his authorities, but he had given the final touch to his other offences by his main conclusion, which was, that man is convinced of the true, the good, and the beautiful, by "his

immediate feelings." In other words, Riedel had followed the multitude, besides women and children, in supposing that the common criterion, "I like this, you like that, and there's no more about it," might be converted into a philosophic principle; whereas, together with pure scepticism, of which it is only a form, it is not philosophy but the despair of philosophy. Herder's exposure of this fallacy in the beginning of the fourth *Wäldchen* is the best of his early work for depth of thought and extent of knowledge, though we miss something of the enthusiasm of the *Fragments*.

He begins by showing that the doctrine of "immediate" conviction, if it were established, would at once reduce criticism to chaos, for it would be impossible to advance beyond the particular in each case. It is hopeless to say, "What a man feels to be true is true," for in that case might not Klotz say to himself, "Mr. Privy Councillor Klotz, your writings are beautiful; O, so beautiful! so original, so excellent, so deep, so godlike—I feel it! What a man feels to be beautiful is beautiful as far as he is concerned, and nobody can contradict him?" It is useless to extend this criterion to general agreement, for the rule, "What pleases every one must be beautiful," affords no basis for philosophy, but merely says that the philosophy of the beautiful has no rules—in other words, that it cannot exist. Thus, if Riedel's theory is accepted, "the judgment-day of German philosophy is come." The truth is, Herder continues, that we know nothing by immediate conviction except the fact of our own existence, and, in rather a different sense as it were, "by a necessary hypothesis," the actuality of the external world. Of the beasts we know too little to dogmatise; but, from the time when self-consciousness first dawned on man, it has been the work of philosophy or reason to make clear to him the conceptions that lay darkly in his soul, just as the conceptions of the universe lie hidden in the embryo. Each least separation, or analysis, the earliest perceptions, as of distance, or the fact of the external world ("I am not what I touch"), imply judgment, that is to say, a conclusion of reason. The human race, like the human child, thus first perceived the true or actual, then the good, and last the beautiful; and it is absurd to talk of three distinct faculties of immediate perception, "common sense," conscience, and taste, when in reality the three faculties are the same. Memory and imagination, together with wit, perfect the whole, and thus by continual practice the act of judgment becomes so quick as to seem like an immediate perception.

As to the particular case of *Æsthetics*, Riedel had mistaken the

meaning of the word, supposing it to be the art of thinking in accordance with beauty, whereas it is the science of beauty. Riedel had asked, "Does a man of genius think of these rules when producing his work?" This is beside the point, for creation is thus confused with criticism. It is quite true that the greater the genius the less does he think of rules, for it is he that gives the rules. Neither was Riedel right in his assertion that there is no standard of beauty, for taste changes according to age and climate. The idea of beauty was certainly not the same to the Greek, to the Christian, and the Arab; beauty changes as a Proteus, but still remains one under different forms. At the root of all forms there lies one ideal of beauty, and it is possible to rise above all limitations of age, nation, and personality, and recognise beauty to the full wherever it may occur; for the ideal of beauty is a form of reason, which, as it developes, is reflected in the external world and history of man.

After a panegyric on Baumgarten, Herder proceeds to examine the functions of the senses, especially as regards their perception of the beautiful. Sight leads him into a long discussion on optics, according to the principles of Berkeley's *Theory of Vision*, and on the difference between painting and sculpture; which latter, he maintains, falls rather under the faculty of touch than sight. Music, as a science, is next examined, to discover the difference between sound and tone, and the relative positions of melody and harmony. The other arts, such as dancing, architecture, and even gardening, follow in their turn. But the whole of this last part of the fourth *Wäldchen* is careless and incomplete compared with the first, being written when Herder was tired of the business, and had his thoughts distracted in many ways. One passage, in which he returns to his old theme of education, may be quoted as still worth consideration:—

How lamentable is the condition of the whole realm of modern education! We spend so much time in learning the thoughts of others that we end by learning nothing else but how to learn. From youth up our teachers give themselves endless pains to rock us, as in a cradle, into a convenient lethargy of soul. Everything is made easy for us; we are allowed to find out nothing for ourselves, and the consequence is that all our life long we are incapable of discovery.

But after the surprise of the first part of this *Wäldchen* the

remainder seems but tame. For it is a surprise that Herder, in spite of his education, in spite of his abhorrence of barren speculation, in spite of an almost irresistible attraction to the sunny simplicity of the English school, should so clearly have perceived the supposed error that lies at its root; and, whilst clinging to Bacon and Locke, should have had the courage to stretch out his hand to Leibnitz, in order to gain some unity in life, and some foundation for experience. It is hard to fix his exact position on this question in later life; but he certainly shows an inclination to turn against this earlier theory, and lay his foundations on the quicksands of individual judgment.

After this near approach to metaphysics, we may now pass to certain treatises written by Herder in Riga, that would in those days, at all events, have been thought very closely connected with religion. These treatises are really short sketches or fragments designed for a book on the archæology of the Hebrews, which Herder had in mind when he turned from his course to humble the pride of Klotz. Some are mere skeletons of essays on such subjects as the origin of religion, and the differences and history thereof; but others are fully worked out, the most important being on the Mosaic story of creation and the institution of the Sabbath, and on the deluge and lives of the patriarchs. Throughout this work Herder clearly announces himself a disciple of the new school of biblical criticism, as represented by Ernesti, Semler, Spalding, and, above all, Michaëlis. He takes the book of Genesis, and, with his considerable knowledge of oriental things, he begins to examine it verse by verse, not in the spirit of blind orthodoxy, that will set all right, no matter by what effort, still less in the spirit of Voltaire. His conclusion is (and he boasts himself the first to have reached this conclusion) that the first chapter, containing the account of the Creation, is a poem, an oriental song, probably composed long before the invention of writing by some true poet of that far-off time, who thought thus best to explain to himself the mystery of the universe. It was intended for the memory, being divided into regular verses or antistrophes, with

something like a chorus. Herder even goes further, and conjectures that the story of Creation was sung every morning from temple roofs by Magi, and the story of the Fall every evening. Dwelling on almost every word, he shows how oriental is the whole idea, how sublime in its simplicity, and beautiful as a witness of humanity in an age when poetry was universal. The explanation is intrinsically complete, and, as Herder says, it is strange that no one should have imagined it before.

For, he continues, how vain are the attempts of physics to give us a key by interpreting the "days" as periods, and bewildering us with endless follies of that sort. Equally vain are the subtleties of dogmatic Christianity, which breaks through the very first laws of literary criticism by considering the story entirely apart from its connexion and history, and reading into it modern ideas of the Trinity, optimism, and angels, at the same time opposing science, "so that things have come to such a pass that, when a true natural philosopher is given to reveal to us the wonders of God's creation, he is rewarded with chains and daggers, or at best with red-hot calumny and persecution, if his system does not fit in with Moses." Foolish, too, are the mystic metaphysicians who wrangle about the possibility of creation out of nothing, and reduce God to a mere metaphysical thought. But if any one find fault and jeer at this poem he deserves the answer which Noah, according to the fable, gave to the ass, that stood finding fault outside the ark, "Get in, you ass."

Herder discusses the story of the Deluge in the same spirit, and incidentally exposes the absurdity of the fashionable proof of its extension from the distribution of fossils; "for if we had never heard of a deluge we should have had no difficulty in accounting for them by the natural course of things when the face of the world was very different." In another essay he compares the Sabbath with Sunday, and laments the stiff and monotonous solemnity which people in those days thought it right to assume when they went to church. He even calls this stereotyped respect for Sunday "the opium of the soul." But we have already seen something of his views on this subject, and the sketch of his work at Riga may here close, though nothing has been said of his reviews for Nicolai's paper, nor of his popular essays for the *Riga Journal*.

We must regard these early writings of Herder as parts of one book, which it was the work of his life to expound and develope; for in them lie the germs of all his future activities. Various as are the paths of thought which he has here opened to view, each leading like every other path to the end of the world, yet they all start from one point; and if we stand there we find that they are not cross-roads but radii. Unless the foregoing sketch—which is nothing more than an analysis of Herder's first productions or even a statement of his more important conclusions—has completely failed of its purpose owing to brevity or obscurity, it will have been plain to everyone that this main point is Herder's unwavering insistence on the law of growth or the unity of nature in its development. From this all his other conclusions naturally follow; the absurdity of imitation and attempts to revive dead languages, the vital connection between thought and language, the importance of the common people, of their speech and their songs, the beauty of originality and nature contrasted with the weakness of the artificial, the true criticism that takes everything in connection with its surroundings and the past, and refuses to call in the supernatural where any scientific explanation can be imagined; for all knowledge and all experience together with the arts and poetry make one chain which is the development of man, and we cannot take a link here and a link there and extol or condemn it at our pleasure. The effect of these writings, especially of the *Fragments*, was quick and beyond expectation, though most readers only followed one of the paths, and wandered even from that. Yet what we may call the first German revolution had thus begun; do we not hear the hum of mighty workings?¹ Herder was to see a second revolution, and perhaps a third; the fourth was Heine's; the fifth has passed out of the region of the air, and for its issue we are still waiting.

¹ Keats, *Sonnet to Haydon*.

CHAPTER VII.

FRANCE, 1769—1770.

“ We struggle, fain to enlarge
Our bounded physical recipiency,
Increase our power, supply fresh oil to life,
Repair the waste of age and sickness: no,
It skills not! life's inadequate to joy,
As the soul sees joy, tempting life to take.”

CLEON.

WE can now imagine how mixed were Herder's feelings as he stood on the ship that evening in early June and watched his friends disappear in the storm till their boat was like a black speck; and his heart, as he tells us in some almost inspired lines, was full of foreboding of a time when all friends, all joy, and life itself, should seem fading from his sight like a black speck into the distance of the past. Now that Riga was behind him, his eyes were open to all her possibilities, and he was overwhelmed with regrets for the things which he had left undone. So to all men the past and future are full of opportunities, and none dare cast the first stone, if too often the present seemed to Herder a blank.

Yet on the whole he was cheerful, and the humour of life once more threw its shield round him. At all events he was quit of Klotz and a conflict that was becoming not only painful but degrading, for, in his anxiety to remain anonymous in spite of the personalities of Klotz, Herder had positively denied the authorship of the *Wälder*, adding that he was quite as much displeased at their tone as Herr Klotz himself. His strength of conviction could not carry so sensitive a nature through the pain of scorn. It is but another instance of the juvenile Pro-

testant who chalks up "No Popery" on the wall and runs away; his sentiments no doubt do him credit, but we cannot compliment him on his bravery. The manœuvre was as vain as foolish, for Herder remained as visible as a child with face hidden in its mother's skirt; but nobody thought much the worse of him, for it was in accordance with the literary morality of the day. Yet, now that he was quite clear of the affair, he must have felt like a man drawn out of a pit. With the same sense of freedom he took leave of his offices as preacher and schoolmaster. He felt that his life was full of contradictions, that he was confined by forms which to him had ceased to have meaning; he wanted a time to breathe and to clear his own ground, and, first of all, to find out exactly where he was; for a man who is obliged to speak much will easily persuade himself that he is where he is not, and, under the urgency of compromise, we have a tendency to become what we say we are. How refreshing then was the contrast,—as Herder himself again and again represents it in his letters and so-called *Diary* of this time,—the contrast between the study, the ink-pot, the pulpit, the school-room, the endless speaking of his old life, and the ship with rustling sails, the republic in little, hovering in freedom between the abyss of the sea and the abyss of the sky, the sweet danger and strong contact with actual life, and over all the silence.

Of the details of the voyage we know very little, for Herder's *Travel-book*, or *Diary*, is as unlike the tourist's journal as possible. Perhaps owing to the storm, the ship was obliged to lie off near the harbour for two days; and Herder wrote to Hartknoch that he felt like Jonah, only he hoped that his whale would not keep him there the full three days before she began at all events to move. The gale was succeeded by a long period of calm, and the progress was accordingly very slow. Coasting along past Courland, Prussia, and Sweden, with its cliffs of Olaus famous in song, they reached the islands of Denmark in about a fortnight. To Herder everything was a peaceful dream, and he was full of dreamy plans and speculations. The shoals

of herring as they rush under the ship suggest to him the vast immigrations and struggles of mankind in the long-forgotten ages of the past; the porpoises sigh and gambol around; and to his mind is revealed the infinite life of the sea. He wonders how far the fishes have senses like ours, whether they have love or any notion of morality. He even imagines that the sea may be only a kind of thicker air in which the fishes are the birds, whilst on the very bottom there may be dwelling a race of strange creatures who can no more swim than we can fly; he longs for a cunning arrangement of telescopes that he may see to the very depths.

Yet after all his mind is not changed; he is full of large plans for the future, and he soon regrets that he has not brought Klopstock and Michaëlis on Job with him. *Ossian* seems to have been his only book, though perhaps he had not even that on his first voyage; and, in common with most people of a time when true criticism and knowledge of nature were but beginning to return to life, he prized it highly. He was in the midst of the scenes where the stories were imagined; he hoped even to go to Scotland and see Macpherson in the flesh and the real hills, where the sons of the mountain, the mere, the mist, and the rest of them, were wont to make their haunt. The air seemed full of the songs of bards and the sagas of the sea-kings. The superstitions and wild tales of the sailors added to the charm. Like Heine, many years after in the same sea, he must almost have imagined that every red sail was as full of mystery as the Flying Dutchman. One beautiful night they passed by Copenhagen, and the next day by the royal hunting-lodges and the fleet, when they drank the king's health in the last of their Rhenish. Did Herder think, one wonders, of "the custom more honour'd in the breach than the observance?" For the day after, the ship put in at Helsingör (Hamlet's Elsinore), where they landed, sent letters back to Riga, and probably changed vessels. It cost Herder a severe struggle to give up all hopes of seeing Klopstock, Cramer, and Gerstenberg, now that he was so close to Copenhagen, but his companion, Gustav Berens,

was going on business to France, and Herder seems to have promised to bear him company, though it was his original desire to visit Scotland and England first. Accordingly, passing out of the Sound they coasted round Jutland (apparently with some sight of Scotland) and past the Netherlands, till they reached the Channel and Lear's cliffs on the second of July, and finally cast anchor off Painbœuf on the fifteenth, proceeding up the river to Nantes next day. Towards the latter part of his six weeks' journey Herder seems to have become tired of the monotony of such a life, "but," he adds in one of his letters, "one gets accustomed to everything, as the penitent girl said of purgatory."

Like most people who for the first time land in France he was much surprised to hear the children with their wooden shoes, the fish-wives in white caps, and the rough pilots all talking the polite language of the courts, and also like most people he was annoyed to find that, in spite of the hardships of his education, in spite of his wide knowledge of French literature, he could hardly understand a word. The first sight of Nantes seemed to him monstrous and even grotesque, and, finding afterwards that others had thought it only beautiful, he was inclined to suppose that this was due to the peculiar character of his vision, that naturally received everything at first sight under forms of Gothic vastness and irregularity.

✓ The tendency of my mind, he goes on, seems to be in all cases to the sublime. How closely my love borders on the sublime—even on the melancholy! Separation and distance are more mighty to me than the present moment to other men. How I am moved by any unhappiness of my friend (*Freundin*), by a tear in her eye! Nothing fills me with such emotion as absence. Hence my affection for the shadows of antiquity and the far-off times of ages that are flown.

From which it is evident that the image of Madame Busch had not yet departed from his mind.

The travellers on arriving in Nantes lodged with a M. Babut, with whom Gustav Berens probably had business relations. His wife was a cheerful and lively lady after the best type of French

provincial life. She showed Herder much kindness, helping him over his first awkward endeavours with the language, an awkwardness that was increased by his natural shyness. He felt that he was like a great barbarian, mangling that pretty speech; but, as he hoped to remain unknown and free from the responsibilities of reputation, he was more at his ease, for among perfect strangers we grow indifferent to public opinion. Unfortunately even this hope was dispelled, for one day as he was driving in the country with Madame Babut she turned to him and said, "By the way, M. Erdèr, have not you written a book on your literature?" "No, Madame," replied Herder, "I am not the same Erdèr; I have not the honour to be an author." "Oh, that's all very well!" retorted the lady. "We know all about you; you are a minister. You are ——" and so on. It appears that the secret had been let out by a young Swede named Koch, who, living in Hamburg, though now on business in Nantes, took much interest in German literature, and may even have had some acquaintance with Lessing himself. To Herder he soon became attached, and in their zeal for knowledge the two might be seen at five o'clock in the morning wandering through the woods round Nantes, Herder discoursing swiftly on all things human and divine, and Koch sucking therefrom what advantage he could with his cold and rather wooden intellect. These woods were much consolation to Herder, and when Koch was not with him he would take a book and dream there of old Mohrunge days.

And so week after week went by, till his friends in Riga began to wonder what on earth kept the man so long in Nantes, and Herder thought some of them were inclined to complain that the money with which they supplied him was being wasted. They did not know how essential was this season of rest. Herder was in weak health and seems to have undergone another eye-operation, though he only mentions this once. He was anxious not to advance to Paris before he could use French with convenience, and was well pleased to keep for a time out of sight of his enemies in Germany. The French authors,

especially Montesquieu and the Encyclopædists, then at the height of their power, occupied much of his attention, and he was determined to learn the French character side by side with their language. A great change, too, was passing over his mind; he was heartily tired, as he says, of “wandering through groves of criticism,” and he yearned now to get some of the reality of life. It is true he finished the fourth *Wüldchen*, after a fashion, at Nantes, as we have seen, and promised again and again to send it to Hartknoch; but it is doubtful if it was ever sent, and certainly it was not published. A new scheme was now in his head; he would write a book “not for the public, but for himself,” and it was this idea that really detained him at Nantes. The outcome was the journal of his voyage mentioned above.¹ Part of it was written on board, and at Nantes it was brought to an end; though, like Herder’s other works, not definitely finished, for we have a sketch of a continuation.

This journal reveals much that would otherwise be obscure in Herder’s position. It is written with much freedom, in a pointed and almost witty style, probably caught from his study of French, and abounds in far-reaching thoughts and promise of future possibilities. Herder begins with the merely personal—with regrets over time lost by his course of study and his efforts as author and preacher, whereby he had become a bundle of learned papers rather than a man. He longs for external life, its business and pleasures, its society, women, and polite ways. In his self-dissatisfaction he even doubts whether the virtue to which he had attained, and all the conventional virtues of the world, were anything more than the inanity of negative qualities and convenient prohibitions. Under the force of the contrast between the life of a schoolmaster and life on board ship, he is ready to give up all his learning and books for some knowledge of natural philosophy and strict science, that he might give account of the sun and stars, the wind and rain, and the “electric sparks” that dance on the waves. Then

¹ Printed in Herder’s *Lebensbild*, Band ii. pp. 155-334.

come his fond imaginings about the fishes, and their vast wanderings lead him to the idea of a great and philosophic history of mankind and the spirit of man, embracing all times and places, and all the peoples of the earth, with their religion, politics, philosophy, and art. Returning to the sea he laments the inefficiency of Russia's navy, and then treats of sailors in general, their mixture of superstition and fearlessness, their beautiful stories, and the manner of their life and behaviour, recalling the old heroic days.

Next, remembering sweet Riga washed by this universal sea, he ponders over its barbarous luxury, its ignorance and bad taste, its freedom and slavery. Why should he not be the great reformer, the Luther of this Livonia? That should be the object of his travels; he would gather up in himself the wisdom of Europe, and of all its best authors, from Sterne and Richardson to Montesquieu and Möser; would study history and novels, politics, philosophy, poetry, and the stage; would perhaps write a wonderful book on human and Christian culture, suited for every station of life and treating of every branch of knowledge and education; would then return, win the favour of the court (perhaps even of Katherine herself, he hints in another place); would become a public man, and study every phase of politics; would change the merchants and strangers of Riga into patriots, and, by preaching "the virtue that is suited to this age," would raise Livonia to the ideal province, where every man should be "illuminated, instructed, refined, reasonable, cultured, virtuous, and capable of enjoyment;" where every national school-child should be as pleasant a thing as Rousseau's Emil.

Full of this idea, and believing that a perfect training of youth is the first thing necessary to reform the world, he at once set to work upon a scheme of ideal education, which he carefully followed out into the smallest details, evidently intending that it should become practical as soon as he returned to Riga. The breadth of view, the freedom and reality of this scheme, almost place Herder in the same rank with the greatest

✓ leaders of educational doctrine. He shows himself so far in advance of the schoolmasters of his own century that we can hardly believe he is not writing for us. He begins of course by overthrowing the predominance of his old enemy the Latin grammar, and insists that variety is absolutely essential in a school.

If possible there must be a number of masters, and the whole school should come under the influence of each in different hours, so as to avoid the monotony and weariness of the form system, in which the same master is obliged to face the same boys all the day long. Even more important is a variety of subjects, which will give the children a chance of finding out in what direction their special talents naturally lead them. The school may be roughly divided into three large groups—children, boys, and youths, and the teaching must be adapted to the capabilities and tastes of each group. The subjects in the lowest form will be entirely what the Germans call *real* or natural; the children will be taught the main properties of things in daily use, such as tea and coffee, sugar and wine; also they will learn something of the external form of the world in which they stand, and of the habits of “the animals which they love so much,” their distinctions and resemblances. The child will thus be no stranger in his world; his spirit will be awake, and will be always striving to make discoveries for himself. He will then advance to the first outlines of the meanings of art, manufacture, and invention, together with the first principles of practical mathematics, as illustrated by sounds, water, air, and machines. Next will come stories from history connected with the places where they fell out, including the human parts of the Old Testament, the story of the life of Christ, and the simplest ideas of religion. “The Lord’s Prayer is difficult to explain; the sense and words belong to the time of Christ; its tone is Jewish-Hellenistic, and, as we use it every day, it must be briefly and simply paraphrased into such words as a Christ would now use for children.”

Proceeding now to the next group, we advance to a class of practical science; the boys must be encouraged to work for themselves with the tools and implements best suited for simple production. Their knowledge of natural history must also be increased by means of illustrations and diagrams, and the mysteries of physical geography, the relation of sea and land, of mountain and river, of day and night, must be expounded in the same way. This will lead to an account of the habits of men in different parts of the world, their dress and manners and religions. Mathematics will still only be taught as connected with physics. History will be an examination of the vast changes and revolutions by which

nations have come to be what they are. No term must be admitted that has not a vivid meaning for the hearers. Nothing of our modern history will be left; we shall have no rows of kings, battles, wars, laws, and pitiful characters. Particular attention must be paid to the history of the art and poetry of Greece, and the religion of the Jews, which have had so vast an influence on the world. The third and highest group will deal with physics and mathematics in their most abstract and universal forms, and will study geography and history in their extreme details, including statistics of commerce and finance, and everything that goes to form the history of a people, distinguished from the history of kings and battles. For practical arts the youths should be allowed to visit the workshops of watchmakers and the studios of artists, whom they will imitate of themselves. Last of all, to crown the whole, comes the final result of experience,—logic, philosophy, metaphysics, and theology. As for languages, Herder would have the mother-tongue thoroughly studied first, grammar and style being acquired from experience in that. Then French must be taught in conversation, though when the boys can converse easily they should read the best French models. Latin should be learnt for the sake of its literature; but even this is best taught by conversation. Greek and Hebrew follow in their turn and the course is complete.

Passing from this dream of education, Herder next dreams of politics, reviewing in turn the nations along whose coasts he had sailed. His patriotism for Russia is at its height; to him it is very evident that Russia has the future in her hands, and only needs skilful training. Russia under her imperious Katherine had to all appearance just entered upon a period of startling brilliancy. At this very moment she was slaying the Turk by the thousand together. Galitzin had just walked up to the Turkish fort Chotzim without striking a blow (the second attempt, “the Supreme Being having in the meantime put on his boots” to aid his Russians¹). Frederick might smile and call it “a war between purblind and blind,” but the purblind were certainly having the best of it. Galitzin had been superseded by men of clearer vision, the redoubtable Tottleben amongst the others. A Russian fleet had even sailed all round Europe to Spartan seas bent on the liberation of Greece, and all

¹ Carlyle's *Frederick*, vol. vi. p. 434 (book xxi. chap. iii.), and for the whole story, pp. 459-462.

Europe was convulsed with a fit of premature Byronic enthusiasm. The Partition of Poland lay close in front, and there seemed every chance that in a few years most of Asia would be at Russia's feet. The Czarina was bent on high schemes, and had commanded that a great Book of Laws be forthwith drawn up. Here was a chance for a young man, whose head was full of Montesquieu, to say a word in season. Herder seems to have intended elaborating a great scheme "for the culture of a nation, especially the Russian," and sketches for the work remain to us. For the constitution he was inclined to turn to the East, rather than to antiquity and the West. The powers of Europe seemed to him effete. Frederick, he maintains, had really done no positive service to his Prussia.

Silesia profits not, and his wise men have brought Germany no good. The philosophy of Frederick and Voltaire has spread abroad to the hurt of the world, and example has been even more harmful than doctrine. The sight of Sweden fills him with regret for the noble constitution of the Hanseatic League. Active little Holland, with its discoveries and economy, is fast sinking into a dead magazine of wares and a place of exchange. England may come to ruin through her trade, her national debt, and her American colonies; though, perhaps, she will be long protected by her position, her freedom, and her brains. In France, literature is extinct; the age of Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Rousseau is as past as the age of Louis, and now people are living on the ruins, with their encyclopædias and dictionaries. Even in her best period she had little originality; and now she is afraid to laugh, afraid to love. She is cold, and cares for nothing but "taste"; she is aged, and has lost power of production.

After some criticisms on French authors, Herder turns again to Russia, and shows that the chief barrier in her way was that the people had no conception of honour, owing to their inequality in rank. From this point the *Journal* proceeds more at random, being chiefly occupied with the French, their language and manners; but wandering out into speech in general, sculpture, the Italians, and the advantages of doing much and reading little.

Throughout the whole of this *Journal*, especially in the per-

sonal parts, there is a tinge of discontent with himself and his position, which it is annoying to find in a man of Herder's age. He ought to have been too old for sighs, and we can have little pity for those who pity themselves. But it is only too easy to understand his complaint. He would so gladly take part in "real life," produce something tangible, substitute action for thought, lay his hand to the destiny of nations; he would so gladly be what he is not. His ideal of education turns out to be the exact opposite of his own when a boy. He is ready to say with Wagner, "True, I know much, but then I would know all;" he is even ready to count his much as nothing, and surrender all in return for what might have been. He sees the blemishes of the actual; the possible is bright with golden haze. No one is willing to lay limits on himself. We have seen Goethe devoting his time to bad painting and doubtful treatises on science; we have seen Carlyle imagining that his highest happiness would be to build a wall. For, as Marlowe says, "Where we are is hell," and we have strange dreams of where we might be, till we learn to make our peace with destiny.

But Herder's discontent is not entirely selfish. He pities himself, it is true; but it is as a type of his time and country. How great a thing it would be, he thinks, if all the great men of Germany, instead of poetising, and talking, and making criticisms, would take to doing something for a change. It would be well even, if, instead of grubbing amongst scholarships and dreaming metaphysics, they would set foot on the firm and lovely ground of science, and teach others how to turn the world to their service. Most men of modern time have thoughts like these, and we are slow to perceive that speech is great, though action may be greater. Sometimes, indeed, speech seems the stronger thing, as steam is stronger than the driving-wheel; at other times, again, it is given us to see that both in the end are one. But Herder was at present impatient with thought and speech; he had eyes only for the other side of the circle; and none of our generation will refuse him sympathy.

Herder had now been in Nantes nearly three months, and,

having seen the whole neighbourhood, even as far as Angers with its cathedral, he felt that his friends in Riga might well complain if he lingered any longer. Early in November he took a post-chaise, and, passing probably through Orleans, or perhaps by Chartres, he reached Paris in four days without misadventure, though Gustav Berens, who had parted with him for Bordeaux, was very anxious for his safety; for the country was in a sadly disturbed condition, the people by this time beginning to get very hungry under such government as D'Aguillon and Louis, once the "well-beloved," could give them.

In Paris he stayed with a German artist, or engraver, named Wille, who had made Paris his home for some twenty years, as was the fashion with German artists of those days. Unfortunately, the information we can obtain from Herder's letters as to what he saw in Paris is very slight. We might hope for a glance into that strange society that was then dancing before his eyes, so near the edge of the abyss. He went to Versailles and its gardens, but we only hear that the statues convinced him that sculpture was for the touch rather than the eye; and yet, close at hand, the *Du Barri* may have been looking at him; for it must have been in these very months that she fluttered from the streets to the highest point of glory attainable by unfortunate female. He may have seen preparations beginning for the festivities that were to welcome Theresa's daughter to this stage on her way to the scaffold. But we are told nothing of this. In Paris he felt restless and unsatisfied; he had clear enough eyes to see that all this "taste" and trickery of art was a very different thing from beauty. With the common people he was better pleased. "It is a libel," he writes, "to say that Sterne has never been in France; he has caught the character of the people exactly." His artist friend (too divided in aims, and fond of pleasantry, he complains) conducted him to all the sights—the galleries, the museums, and above all, the theatres. To these last and the great actors of the day Herder paid particular attention. With his head full of Shakespeare it is no wonder that he thought the tragedies and opera stiff, frosty, and

devoid of all human interest; but from the newly-invented polite comedy he was inclined to hope much. He even looks forward to a time when the theatre will take the place of the pulpit and lecture-room.

Herder was not long in making the acquaintance of the literary circle in Paris; Diderot, D'Alembert, Duclos, Thomas, and the other lights of the *Encyclopædia*. Buffon unfortunately was in the country. Of these he writes to Hartknoch that he knows plenty of anecdotes, but will reserve them till they meet, and to us they are therefore lost. He found them all ignorant of German philosophy and literature, except that they admired Gessner for his tender pastorals and jeered at Klopstock. With Diderot, who had recently been saved from his distresses by the bounty of Catherine, Herder had much in common, in spite of the opposition of their characters, and he accounts him "the best philosopher in France." But perhaps Herder did not get all he might have done from Paris; throughout his sojourn there his mind was distressed and divided by perplexities for the future.

He had not been in Paris more than a week or two when he received a letter from Pastor Resewitz, a famous Copenhagen divine and friend of Klopstock, asking him if he were willing to undertake the charge of the Prince-bishop (*Fürstbischof*) of Lübeck's eldest son. They were to travel for three years, and Herder was to receive 300 thalers and some position at Kiel university afterwards. Resewitz added that the prince's hofmeister, von Cappelmann, who was to accompany them on the travel, was an upright and cultivated man, but reserved and requiring delicate management. Herder's embarrassment was great; he was always better at making plans than at carrying them out; he saw so plainly the advantages of each bundle of hay that he could not determine on either; now this way, now that, he divided his swift mind, and the conclusion was slow in coming. On the one side there were his plans already laid; he meant to go to Holland, to England, and then perhaps to Germany, or, better still, to take ship for Spain and so round to

Italy at last, and then he would return to Riga, or even go on to St. Petersburg and set on foot his grand reforms. All had been clear and straight before him, and now this invitation upset everything. For it certainly had its advantages and was not to be rejected at once; it would be something to be independent and not have to be always writing for more money; something, too, to travel with a prince, who was going far and was sure of a good reception.

The hope of independence at last decided him, and he accepted the prince's terms though with a heavy heart. As soon as the matter was settled he probably wished it undone; when his Riga friends wrote to congratulate him he was ready to take offence and suppose they were glad to be rid of him. But nothing could be less true; they were full of sorrow and indignation that he should be taken from them, Georg Berens and Hartknoch especially using every exertion to prevent it.

It was, however, too late to turn back now; and, in spite of a promise that the post should be no real hindrance to a return to Riga, Herder left Paris in the latter half of December with very gloomy thoughts at heart. His expressions at this time remind one of Webster's grotesque saying, "We are the stars' tennis balls,"¹ and it is only too probable that, as he mounted the coach and went lumbering away past St. Denis to the north, he sighed, "Oh, I am fortune's fool." Yet as far as France was concerned he could not have been very sorry to be out of her. She had played the tyrant in Germany too long to be loved by a man with Herder's views of national life. The iron of Lessing had entered into her flesh, but she still required a good deal of killing; and, in spite of all Herder's love of life and action, there was at the bottom of his free and liberal mind an uncompromising Germanity, a *Kern-Deutschheit* (to use Carlyle's word), a spirit of Trusty-Eckartism that suffered him not to take pleasure in the delicate revels of the Venusberg.

Travelling without delay to the north-east Herder was in

¹ *Duchess of Malji.*

Brussels at Christmas, and proceeded almost immediately to Antwerp. We know nothing further of his doings in the Netherlands except that he is said to have studied what things of art were to be seen. From Antwerp he took ship for Amsterdam, but not far from the Hague one stormy night they ran on to a sandbank and were in peril of sinking. Years after this Herder wrote: "I still recall the feelings of that night, when, sitting on the wreck of my ship, now unmoved by storm and wave, drenched with spray and exposed to the wind of night, I read Fingal and hoped for the morning." One can compare him with Turner lashed to his mast and gazing out perhaps upon this very sea many years afterwards.¹ In the morning fishers put off in boats and rescued all the party, who had the satisfaction of seeing the ship sink as soon as they got to land.

Passing through the Hague on the twentieth of January, he went on to Leyden and Amsterdam, and made some acquaintance with the distinguished men of these cities, though his mind was too much perplexed with his own future to have much profit of them. In Leyden, however, we must mention rather a weak young creature named Leuchsenring, to whom Herder was much attracted for about three days. His redeeming point was an admiration of Sterne, and he believed that he had discovered in Herder an enthusiastic recruit for an "Order of Sentimentality," which he had in mind to found; we shall meet him again in about a year, without joy. After leaving Amsterdam, Herder drove due east across Friesland to Hamburg, where important events awaited him.

For Lessing was still lingering there, unable to tear himself away, though his departure was only a question of days. We would gladly have heard something of the meeting and conversation of these two men, so alike and yet so different. Unfortunately a letter from Herder to Hartknoch, perhaps containing an account of this, is lost, and we only know that Lessing

¹ Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. v. p. 346.

expressed himself much pleased with Herder, and that the fortnight's intercourse was friendly, even enthusiastic. Lessing was not hurt at Herder's criticism of the *Laocoon*, and thanked him for several suggestions, at the same time soothing by his considerate attention Herder's sensitive spirit, too grievously ruffled by the annoyance of the Klotz party. Their conversation probably turned chiefly on the drama, Burke's essay on the Sublime and Beautiful, and speculations on theology, to which Lessing was now beginning to pay more attention than heretofore. Under this influence Herder regained his calmness and self-respect, and he parted from Lessing with all the admiration for his life that before he had felt for his works, as was sufficiently proved when his great comrade in arms died, his battle being over and his sword buried with him.

Through Lessing he naturally became acquainted with the other leading men of Hamburg, of whom, however, we need only notice one, the poet Matthias Claudius. He was four years older than Herder, had been engaged in editing newspapers or writing for them, and was already beginning to intersperse amongst his prose those simple lyrics which great musicians have not disdained to make immortal. With such ideas of poetry, and a devoted admiration for the "Mage of the North," to visit whom he seems even to have thought of skating to Königsberg one winter, it is no wonder that he gained Herder's friendship. As he was out of employment he could probably devote much of his time to his service, though the love-chains of his Rebecca, whom he safely married two years afterwards, were just at this time beginning to close round him. "A man whose heart was like a red-hot coal," Herder calls him; or, again, "A youth full of innocence, full of moonbeams, and with the scent of the lilies of immortality in his soul." For a long time it was Herder's hope that they might be able to live near each other, but this was impossible; and though some years afterwards, through Herder's influence, Claudius received an appointment with sufficient income, he gave this up shortly, and returned to his native Waldbeck, with its green meadows. But he never

ceased to think of his "grumbling Herder" with enthusiastic admiration to the end, though perhaps not "with a love surpassing the love of women," as at the beginning. Unhappily, under stress of the war, he was forced to burn all Herder's letters to him, so that here again we are deprived of what would have been one of the most useful means of making this history.

On the tenth of March Herder left this happy circle in Hamburg, and proceeding northwards across Holstein he reached the university town of Kiel, where he found the young prince with his hofmeister, Cappellmann, who proved to be even more difficult to deal with than expected. They quickly left Kiel for the little court of Eutin, where Herder stayed some months, busying himself with his new duties, the library, and visits to a scientific friend in Kiel, and at least one visit to Hamburg, where he must have found that Lessing had at length departed. As to the young prince he had some trouble. The boy was clever and good-hearted, and very soon became attached to Herder; but he was inclined to self-questioning, introspection, and sad broodings, with a tendency to religious mania and all its attendant horrors. His mother was morbidly anxious for his welfare, and his former tutor had taken him through a course of studies at the very list of which an English schoolboy's brain would whirl as at a glimpse of the infinite. Herder, with his keen sense of life and reality, made every effort to save him from these torturing scruples and horrible despondency, the mother now aiding as best she could; but at each attempt he found his hands were tied by the surly hofmeister. Yet things went well enough as long as they remained at Eutin. Herder took much pleasure in the country, with its "castle, lakes, cattle, horses, and green meadows"; the sea too was not far off, and through his liveliness and bright knowledge he was soon very popular with the court, especially with the ladies. His sermons on Sunday were much admired, for people had never heard a man preach after this fashion; and, though the parsons and learned accused him of Socinianism, and so on, the unlearned were content to let it be so, finding comfort in his words, Socinian or

not. At last it was time for the party to start on their travels, and Herder felt very apprehensive of a journey with the prince and the difficult hofmeister, when there would be no one to take his part, nothing to distract attention, and no society to enforce that external politeness so healthful to melancholy. He therefore made it a condition that he should be allowed to be quit of the party when he pleased; and on these terms the three set out in the middle of July 1770 for Hamburg, Herder knowing as little as other mortals how great things lay close before him.

CHAPTER VIII.

DARMSTADT, 1770.

“Love’s the soil
Plants find or fail of.”—INN ALBUM.

“I have danced through day
On tiptoe at the music of a word,
Have wondered where was darkness gone, as night
Burst out in stars at brilliance of a smile.”—INN ALBUM.

AFTER staying two or three days in Hamburg, where Herder again took sweet counsel with Claudius, who found him on this occasion “a very sympathetic youth, full of life, but yet not averse to subtleties,” the little party of opposites proceeded, as in courtesy bound, to visit the courts of Hanover and Cassel on their way southward. We hear nothing of the court of his Britannic Majesty, nor of the ladies whom Zimmermann found so haughty by reason of their tea-drinking, nor of Göttingen, through which the travellers passed on their way to Cassel, nor of the Brocken, that rose like a phantom on their left. But Herder, who had already begun to labour at his *Plastik*, naturally took much interest in the collections and galleries both in Hanover and especially at Cassel. For here he met, as superintendent of the museum, the Professor Raspe, whose knowledge and knavery were making some stir in the world a hundred years ago. At this time he had not yet begun to steal, at least, not in an open and scandalous manner; he had not yet set the hearts of the learned of England in a flutter by a threat to publish a volume of our Royal Society’s *Unphilosophic Transactions*, and he was far enough from his obscure death in

✓ Ireland. To Herder he was of interest, not only for his knowledge of art but as being one of the first to draw German attention to *Ossian* and Percy's *Reliques*, then so new and refreshing to any child of nature. After saying farewell to him and Cassel, the party drove through Hanau, and quietly entered Darmstadt in the middle of August. It was a month since they had left Eutin, and they were to stay in Darmstadt a fortnight, for the young prince's mother was of the house of Darmstadt born. Thus, unconsciously, do we go to meet our fate, pushed along our path by this accident and by that.

According to the barbarous etiquette of the time, Herder was not thought worthy to dine at the same table with the nobility of the court. He was set to take his meals with the court governess, Mademoiselle Ravanell, whom, no doubt, he found at least as entertaining as the average noble. She introduced him to Merck—Mephistofeles Merck, as Goethe generally calls him—and Merck in his turn to the family of the Privy-Councillor Hesse, who had married a lady named Flachsland, one of a large family from Elsass, left in a poor way at their father's death. The Flachslands had come originally from Bern in the Reformation times, had dropped their old title of nobility, and settled down to a quiet citizen life, like Herder's grandfather, whom we saw fleeing north from the mountains of Silesia. And now, on a visit with Merck to Councillor Hesse, Herder met one of the orphan sisters of the lady of the house, a girl of twenty, named Marie Karoline, who will remain of interest to us.

We have a picture of her as she then was.¹ The forehead is rather low, and straight with the nose; the light-brown hair rolled loosely back and bound with a single fillet, escaping down the neck on each side in Greek fashion; the eyebrows are clearly marked, and the blue eyes straight and fearless. If we must find fault it would be with the mouth, which is hardly tight and firm enough to escape the sentimental, at all events in these

¹ There is a fair engraving of it in Herder's *Lebensbild*, vol. iii.

earlier years. The neck is long after the manner of those days, and rises gently to the breast, reminding one of Winckelmann and his Greeks, with their "clusters of grapes"; the figure slim, delicate, and very straight; something noticeably Greek about the whole, for better or worse, as Herder and others were quick to see; even when she was far on in life, Richter used to call her a Greek goddess. This classic appearance is further heightened in the portrait by her raiment, a kind of loose toga, open in front, and apparently all of one piece, defying analysis; heightened too, I suspect, by the false art of the time, which in its effort after the so-called ideal, the classic and statuesque, did its best to polish nature into inanity, and to wipe out truth by rule; for relief from which tyranny of death we owe first thanks to Herder himself.

Karoline had been living for some time with her sister in rather a depressed and unhappy condition, chiefly owing to the impetuous temper of her brother-in-law and other family cares; so that cause for pity was not absent, and with Herder, as we have seen, the power of pity was strong. For the rest, it seems to have been a case of love at third sight; for Herder boasts that on the first two visits he only felt some slight interest in this girl, with her retiring ways and speech of Elsass: and it was not till the third afternoon, on occasion of an expedition to some pheasant-preserve in the neighbourhood, that the interest became deeper. He had heard from Merck, and probably from the court-governess, of her good kindness to her brothers and sisters, her cheerful spirit and knowledge of the house, and now he found that Klopstock and the Kleist of his boyhood were her favourite poets too, and whilst, standing in the midst of the little party in the woods, he recited choice passages from these and tender strains from the *Minnesänger* of old, he saw "a gentle tear" steal over her eye of blue (these things were so a century back), and his heart was filled with a light that changed the world.

The next Sunday he was to preach in the "Pine-wood church"; it had been prophesied to him that one of these days

he would preach away some girl's heart, "and now," writes Karoline years afterwards, "I heard his voice as it were the voice of an angel, words of life such as I had never heard before. In the afternoon I saw him and stammered my thanks: from that time forward our souls were one, and one they remain."¹ During the next week they saw each other daily, for Merck and his friends were so much delighted with Herder that they exerted themselves to the utmost to do him pleasure, though they always found they received more than they could give. The woods and pleasant places round Darmstadt were all visited, Herder showing himself at his very best, full of life and enthusiasm, and a quality called "feeling." We can all imagine the rest; the music in the quiet evenings, for Karoline could play the harpsichord and sing as well, having been always fond of music, "especially the plaintive, languishing kind," and now finding a new speech in it; we can imagine the fears and restlessness of the poor girl, "no sleep night after night," she writes; the walks in the twilight woods, never quite alone, it appears, for the court-governess and Merck's wife were from polite France, and had ideas of propriety. It is all visible to us; that last evening especially, in "the Avenue," when the terror of parting lay so close in front and speech became disjointed or impossible; and so on, as it has ever been since summer first was leavy.

On Sunday, the twenty-fifth of August, to celebrate Herder's birthday, he being now twenty-six, the little party assembled in Mlle. Ravanell's rooms in the castle. The next Tuesday Herder was to leave Darmstadt with the prince, and the hearts of all were heavy with the thought that they would see his face no more. When the party broke up he slipped a letter into Karoline's hand declaring his love in admirably calm and self-restrained words, but holding out little hope for the future. Her answer is dated "eleven o'clock at night, Aug. 26," but either it took her till morning to compose, which is likely, or

¹ *Reminiscences*, vol. i. p. 152.

she confused the days, for it must have been written the same night (the 25th), since she appoints a meeting-place for the Monday. This interview was short and in public, and the next evening in the midst of sounds of preparation for departure Herder wrote another more impassioned letter of farewell and sorrow. But in the morning, on going to take leave of Merck, he found Karoline there, no doubt by Merck's friendly arrangement, and, in spite of the scruples of the French wife, the lovers were alone for one eternal quarter of an hour. And then, being already late for the prince and the stern hofmeister, Herder tore himself from the poor girl's passionate embrace, rushed out of the house without saying good-bye to any one, and in two or three minutes more rumbled past the windows in the carriage, venturing to kiss his hand in that direction, and so out through Darmstadt gates again, and away towards Heidelberg southwards.

Concerning the whole of this period our information is almost overwhelming. Not only does Karoline in the *Reminiscences* dwell on these bright days with fond remembrance, as is natural, but since her death the correspondence of the lovers has been published almost every word, and printed out for the world to read. It begins with a short note from Herder offering to lend Mademoiselle Flachslund some novels to read as she cannot get Mendelssohn's *Phædo* from the library. Then comes his letter of declaration, and next her answer taking him as her "guardian-angel," and promising to be to him what Meta was to Klopstock (we are reminded of Werther and Lottchen at every turn, which shows how universal Goethe's picture was); the rest of the letters follow in order, and are of course invaluable for this story. For the most part Herder's letters are full of honest eloquence, natural passion, and true sympathy. The woman's side of his nature was almost excessively developed: he was always "his mother's child," as he says; and he had something of a feminine delicacy of intuition that peculiarly fitted him for the difficult tasks of preaching and writing letters, especially to women. His eloquence is generally greater than

his argument, and his statements better than his reasons ; but if his light is not always "dry," it is at least warm ; when his heart speaks he is generally right, and one sometimes feels that a truth ceases to be divine as soon as it looks round for support. Yet, useful as these letters are, we will not be careful to rake amongst the ashes of dead love, nor coldly to collate and compile from manuscripts that once made two human hearts leap and throb. And now after all this tenderness, this Gretchen episode, let us turn for relief to Mephistofeles Merck.

There was much to attract Herder in this extraordinary man, whose story is one of the saddest tragedies in German literature. Above all, Merck had introduced him to his "dear Psyche," had procured him that quarter of an hour of sweet sorrow, though perhaps more for the fun of the thing than in true kindness, and after the sadness of parting Merck continued to act as secret diplomatist for both sides, receiving the letters, consoling the desolate Karoline in the lonely familiar scenes, and forwarding to the traveller what news of cheer he could. These services seemed to shed a glory of love over Merck, which was slow to fade under all coldness and hints of distrust, and never quite disappeared, even when the warmest friendship had turned to bitterest hate. But, besides this, Herder was charmed by Merck's wealth of knowledge, his interest in history, especially the history of peoples and of the olden times, his unerring criticism and keen insight, supported by the acute satire, which Goethe compares to Swift's.¹ Here was a mind shooting out this way and that, like Herder's own. He had some acquaintance with science, had made large collections of natural objects, and mechanics were his ruin. Also he studied art, and spent much time in drawing and painting, from which Herder might get hints for his *Plastik*.

Of Darmstadt by birth, Merck had spent his happiest years in French Switzerland, whence he had brought back the wife mentioned above. He now held office in his native town, but

¹ For Goethe's account of Merck see *Aus meinem Leben*, book xii. near the beginning.

he was too divided in aims to attend to his business, and the rest of the tragedy is generally known. Driven by a demon of production he wasted his means on diverse hobbies, chiefly by experiments in machines and farming; wasted his brains on poetry and branches of literature in which he had no real power; it turned out that his wife had too much propriety to be virtuous; all his friends were estranged by his bitterness and want of truth; Wieland alone was left him by ironical fate, and in 1791 he put an end to his lonely miseries by his own hand. Herder in after years remitted something of his hatred in sorrow for his calamities, but we seldom find it possible thus to separate a man from his fortunes. There was something in Merck's blue-grey eye, Goethe tells us, that reminded one of a tiger; and this is the true key to his character, which is otherwise a riddle. For it must be remembered that, for the next few years, he is one of the most significant figures in Germany; and the man of whom Goethe could say, "on me his influence was of the highest importance," cannot readily be called a failure. Yet he could move no mountains, for he wanted faith; and, wanting faith, he wanted love and hate, the twin children of faith. He saw what was noble and right, but his heart did not believe in its all-sufficiency; with all his knowledge he had no unity; and having no central fire of faith he was made as the sparks that fly upward. Thus he remained a Mephistopheles among the angels; a creature that denied, that never loved one human soul; a beautiful Medusa with eyes that turn the heart to stone; a tiger or any other feline thing by the side of Herder, the trusty watch-dog, and Goethe, the winged courser, lightning-fed.

But we are peering too far into the clouds of the future, and at present all was bright. Herder seemed to have found in Darmstadt not only love but the true friendship of his life. "Perhaps there are only three such men in any country, and three such women in Germany," he writes to Hartknoch. In a few years we shall find him writing, "Merck is the third man I wish I had never met." But at this time he filled a want in Herder's life. He was not a master, like Hamann and Lessing,

whilst he had more scope and manly fixity than Claudius ; the two seemed equal, yet each superior, so that the conditions of friendship were fulfilled ; and it would be interesting to trace the course of the change, were we considering Merck's story rather than Herder's ; but in this case the praise and admiration we instinctively pay to the deserter, owing to his stronger position, belong entirely to Merck ; and Herder, with whom the bier of the friendship remained, is proved the frailer to demonstration. Yet we must try to forgive him this, remembering that we are but men.

It would be interesting, too, had we time, to watch what change arose in Herder under the stress of love, which, though late for so restless and warm-hearted a man, had yet at length visited him, now for the first time, we may say, as he himself protests again and again ; for the affair of Madame Busch may be overlooked as different in kind. Gervinus, always ruthless against Herder, contends that the influence of "this Greek woman" contributed to the decline and ruin he observes in his intellect. How far this is true must be gathered in general from the rest of our story. For the present, at all events, we may divine what kept him so "quiet and dumb, incapable of speech, incapable of thought," as he rolled through the Rhine country by the prince's side.

But, further than all this, there was another perplexity, which, added to the happy confusion of friendship and love, might well make his companions think him "melancholy and ill." Just before he left Eutin a letter from Westfeld, minister of the Graf of Schaumburg-Lippe in Bückeburg, had at length reached him by way of Riga, offering him the position of head-preacher in Bückeburg on advantageous terms. Readers will have forgotten this Graf of Bückeburg, but he was Thomas Abbt's patron and friend ; and, having read Herder's memorial *Torso* on Abbt, nothing would please him but to have the author in his service. Herder, unable as usual to make up his mind, had put the letter aside for "circumstances" to answer. And now, in Darmstadt, he had received a second letter from Westfeld, who complains

that since the first, in February, he had written at least twenty times in vain. Herder's difficulty may be imagined; he could no longer leave the decision to Providence; Italy, Riga, his Russian reforms, or life in green Holstein, must all be given up. On the other hand, it was time he reached some firm footing in the world, and might he not soon have another life besides his own to look after? Accordingly, the day before he gave his first letter to Karoline, he had written to accept the Count's proposals, on condition that he could obtain leave from the court of Eutin, and might not be required to come to Bückeburg at once, but be allowed time to continue his travels perhaps even as far as Italy. He seems hardly to have expected that the Count would suffer these conditions, and his mind was anxious, though he probably could not decide what to hope. Besides, the scheme put him in a false position with the prince and the hofmeister; and most people have felt how grievous a thing it is to seem to act with others, and, at the same time, to keep a secret reservation at heart.

Full of these reflections and bewilderment, broken only by a man who played a "David's harp" during dinner, Herder went on his way to Heidelberg, whence he wrote both to Merck and Karoline. She was at a ball that night, where she "thought of him the whole time" of course, and Herder is with her in the phantasy of moonbeams. For himself he shuns his kind and wanders in the twilight alone. The party next proceeded to Karlsruhe, where they stayed for a day or two, the Count Karl Friedrich of Baden-Durlach, an upright and noteworthy man, taking much interest in Herder, and treating him with friendly politeness, though Herder was still too distraught to care for anything but solitude and the woods. Unfortunately, too, the countess was fain to be esteemed a woman of learning, and hoped that in Herder she had found a fair field for display. But the man who "fought shy of no creature in the world so much as a woman of learning" did not meet her hints and compliments with the flattery to which she was accustomed "from

fools, French and German.”¹ He had no sympathy with her bits of knowledge, and spoke to her “as from another world.” For to him, who could hardly forgive special learning in a man except under the plea of necessity, a learned woman seemed monstrous and unnatural. We must remember, of course, that the German ideas of learning at that time were rather different to ours at present. For this reason, he supposed, a certain coldness arose between them; and it is likely, for the learned lady of the court must have thought Herder wanting not only in politeness but in penetration. He was very glad, therefore, that those days were shortened. The party went round rapidly by Mannheim, and at length reached Strassburg, apparently on the fourth of September.

Herder’s first letters from Strassburg are very gloomy, and these days are dark. We must begin to see of him that he was not a man to be happy in life, if that mattered. He is driven up and down into extremes, being too acute and sensitive in heart and brain to live the equable life of cattle regardless of the future, and yet unable quite to attain the calm freedom of self-centred blessedness, which is the supreme reward of a few high natures in most ages. For the present he was dwelling in utter loneliness, “cooped up as in a prison” at Strassburg, “that dull and wretched place without woods or pleasant walks,” so near, too, to happy Darmstadt—so near and yet so far. The fair picture of Karoline floats before him; he cannot read, he cannot think. His mind is rent in quarters “like Damiens” by the horses² (one remembers the court-ladies of Louis Well-beloved and their “*pauvres z’veaux!*”). The letter was long in coming from Bückeburg. Whither, then, was he doomed to go next? To Italy, to Riga, to Bückeburg, or back to Holstein? With what sword should he open this oyster of a world? The society of the self-enwrapped and melancholy prince was not cheering, and the hofmeister always so difficult was now becoming

¹ Letter to Karoline, *Lebensbild*, vol. iii. pp. 75-76.

² All these quotations are from his letters to Karoline or to Merck at this time, *Lebensbild*, vol. iii.

impossible. Had he been alone with the prince, he thought, all might have been well; but now his position was indefinite, and the overbearing hofmeister reduced him to a mere appendage of the party. Herder, who always hated court ways and the emptiness of etiquette, felt that if he stayed with these people any longer he must "cease to be Herder"; and what shall it profit a man if he gain a competency and lose his own soul? But when one day at dinner he had to "go begging below the salt, without napkin or attendants, a thing of no account, nay, a laughing-stock to the rest," his bitter cup was full, and he determined to demand his dismissal, even if nothing else offered. Happily in the middle of September the letter from Bückeburg arrived formally appointing him to the post and accepting all his conditions, only urging speed; "for both the Count and Westfeld were impatient for the society of a man of such learning and renown." A few days afterwards he told the prince that they must part, and to his astonishment the boy was overcome with sorrow, the first emotion the poor creature had ever shown, and they left each other with tears. The hofmeister was probably not inconsolable, though he expressed the usual polite regrets, as did afterwards the bishop and his duchess, with more sincerity. "And so," writes Herder to Merck, "another dream is at an end. Our life is as a watch in the night."

The one ray of light during all this dark and bewildering time had been the letters from Darmstadt, but, when the darkness was blackest, this too suffered eclipse. For in a curt, angry, and even sarcastic letter Karoline, who had much strength of soul in spite of her tender tears (Goethe always called her "Electra"), suddenly wrote saying that their correspondence must end, that she would cease to trouble him with her letters, that there was no bond between them, and she did not care to look forward to years of letter-writing; for they would probably never see each other again. Herder after opening the letter with a lover's expectation was overwhelmed as by an upheaval of the solid world; hardly a month yet gone since she entreated him "to write, not to forget her, to come again,"

and now an end, and as it seemed without even a woman's show of reason. To us indeed the explanation no longer seems difficult. Her kindly friends in Darmstadt had been busy, especially her brother-in-law; had represented Herder as a random "man of genius," unstable as water, having no backbone, no "character," no competency; true there was no open engagement, nor solemn betrothal, but we can imagine the silly whisperings, the becks and nods, the unanswerable pointed remarks of gossips out of employment at *Kaffee-Klatsch* or card-table assembled.¹ Then, again, she herself was perhaps a little disappointed that her footing was not more secure, for Herder spoke very gloomily about the future, and was inclined, as she complains, to use too many words of mere friendship; perhaps after all he was only amusing himself with her as a "platonic" acquaintance, and would presently flit to another flower; at all events this letter would force him to become explicit, and, if all were well, at least it would be nice to hear his protestations from the beginning again. She was suspicious, too, because he asked her to burn all his letters, a request with which it is needless to say she never thought of complying.

Her indignant letter has not been preserved, and we must guess at its contents from quotations in Herder's answer and our general knowledge of nature. The conclusion must be that Herder mainly had himself to thank for his punishment. Owing partly to his life as a schoolmaster, partly to his inexperience in lover's art, he had displayed a certain want of tact and sympathy which contradicts his real character. He sinned through ignorance; but of ignorance, nature and women take no account. Karoline was tired of being continually asked, "Have you read this, have you read that?" as if the important thing was what she knew, not what she was. Herder had laughed at her girlish admiration for tender Gessner with his ideal pastorals; had even ventured to hint that pious Klopstock was not all her fancy pictured. He asked her opinion of Lessing's *Minna*, and when she ventured a few simple and innocent objections against it and

¹ Like their English counterparts in one of Shelley's letters.

comedy in general, as vulgar and savouring of low life, Herder devoted four pages to pulling her criticisms to pieces in the style of the *Fragments*, or a letter to a learned friend; four pages wasted on criticism, that might have been filled with words of love; nay, one word would outweigh them all: no disappointment could be more bitter. And was she to have no opinion of her own? Was she to be merged in a pedant? In her indignation she tells "nasty, ill-tempered Herder," that henceforth, profiting by his rebukes, she will take delight in comedy, and try not to be shocked by any coarseness.

In his next letter also Herder had defended himself against the charges of her brother-in-law, as to "want of character," by that short account of his past life to which I have often referred. In self-defence he is almost unavoidably conceited, and through the want of irony the tone is unpleasant. Here, too, comes that fatal admission about the arms of the "unhappy lady." Karoline's mind was made up; and, if the thing was to be done, it had best be done thoroughly. In answer to his ceaseless complaints, his laments for the past and gloomy hesitations for the future, she observes that she "hopes things will go well with him, and that he will cease to be tossed so much hither and thither on the waves of restless fate" (for who can forgive a self-miserable man?); and she adds that she has "deceived herself, and all constraint or bond must be at an end." Her triumph was complete. For the first time in his life Herder was fairly struck out of himself. In the agony of his grief and fear he forgets his learning, his reputation, his position, the past and future, and all the other incumbrances of personality, and becomes an infinite man; he has strength as of a sun over planets; every ray of his soul pours itself into one bright focus till the heat is white; he is almost a poet. His next three letters, written in quick succession without waiting for answers, are amongst the most real and eloquent of his works. If, as is probable, Karoline only hoped for love's renewal, and only purposed to read Herder a lesson in the art that is no art, her object was more than gained. All doubt was scattered, and

further resistance impossible. The story of the "unhappy lady" had to be cleared up, as we saw, and then the storm melted quietly away into a security of sunshine; a sunshine often overcast, but never again with such terror of blackness. This lover's quarrel must be allowed to take its place in history, for it revealed to Herder something in nature he had missed before, and helped to guide him to the porch of Germany's greatness.

Before entering upon the greatest event of Herder's life, we must make some mention of the cause that kept him in Strassburg after he had quitted the prince in October till the April of the next year. Strassburg was then a great medical school; indeed Herder was inclined to think that the medical students were the only people who got any good from the place, and Goethe was at this time devoting his enthusiasm to anatomy instead of law. Induced by the fame of a Professor Lobstein of Strassburg, Herder determined whilst he was in the way with it to have another operation on his eye. This was the seventh he had suffered since the trouble first began twenty years before. The professor promised a complete cure in three weeks, and Herder was full of hope at the thought of appearing before Karoline free of his infirmity. Alas, the blind minds of men! After six months of torture and gloom the cure was declared impossible. We have full details of the operation both in Herder's letters and in Goethe's *Aus meinem Leben*.¹ But to the layman they are of small profit, for from sickness and people who are merely sick we can get little. It is sufficient to know that the professor set to work manfully with leaden plugs and lancets and awls. The object at the beginning was to bore through the nose-bone, but this was found harder and thicker than human nose-bones ought to be. Another more noteworthy surgeon was called in after some months of this treatment, and did his best with insertions of horsehair and countless cuttings and probings, "as though he were operating on an anatomical corpse." But, after lengthy consultations with learned books, it was thought

¹ Book x. near the beginning.

best to leave bad alone lest worse come of it, and to let the wound heal up. Herder always writes of his sufferings with a defiant humour, that in so sensitive a man is worthy of admiration. Goethe, who was present at most of the operations, was full of wonder at his endurance; "he seemed to suffer less than any one in the room," he writes; and, when the sad truth was out, "his melancholy, even grim, resignation at the thought that he would have to bear in his body this defect to his dying day, was truly sublime, and secured him the eternal honour of those who saw and loved him."

But we must not therefore imagine him cheerful; to him Strassburg looked dreary enough. He calls it a "stupid hole," and we can hardly believe that this is the same Strassburg as in Goethe's book. He had now to live at his own expense, and was falling into debt. Like a sick animal he avoided his kind, and was guilty of some rudeness to be quit of society. Once he writes that he had not spoken to any one for a week; and sometimes he would not leave his room for days together, except for the operations. He could read little or not at all; a bore of a Russian gave him much trouble, though he was on intimate terms with another Russian-German named Pegelow, a cousin of his old friend Begrow in Riga, and now a student of medicine under Lobstein; but Pegelow cared for cards and punch more than philosophy. Through all this dreary time his chief comforts were the letters from Darmstadt and a young man of twenty-one from Frankfurt, with brown eyes "like balls of light," Johann Wolfgang Goethe his name.

CHAPTER IX.

STRASSBURG, 1770—1771.

“Thou, spirit, come not near
 Now—not this time desert thy cloudy place
 To scare me, thus employed, with that pure face !
 I need not fear this audience, I make free
 With them, but then this is no place for thee.”—SORDELLO.

“Just a spirt
 O’ the proper fiery acid o’er its face,
 And forth the alloy unfastened flies in fume;
 While, self-sufficient now, the shape remains,
 The rondure brave, the lilled loveliness,
 Gold as it was, is, shall be evermore:
 Prime nature with an added artistry—
 No carat lost, and you have gained a ring.”

THE RING AND THE BOOK.

“I promise, you shall learn
 By what grace came the goat, of all beasts else, to earn
 Such favour with the god o’ the grape: ’twas only he
 Who, browsing on its tops, first stung fertility
 Into the stock’s heart, stayed much growth of tendril-twine,
 Some faintish flower, perhaps, but gained the indignant wine,
 Wrath of the red press !”—FINE AT THE FAIR.

WE are thus brought face to face with the great difficulty of this story. I should be very unwilling to say with Lewes that Goethe is like Rhenish, Herder like a pot of Bavarian beer. The metaphor is false, partly because Herder is beyond the reach of the loathsome insult, partly because the kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink. But there is, of course, a certain amount of truth at the bottom of it. As has already been said, all the other figures of this period really serve only as the foreground or surrounding of Goethe ; and when he himself comes into view it is difficult, almost impossible, to keep our eyes off

him. We are drawn to him as by a law of spiritual gravitation, and he gives us no rest. If for a time we are repulsed, we return again with a tormenting curiosity. A few months after this he wrote to Herder: "I will not let thee go unless thou bless me;" and it is in the same spirit that we wrestle with himself. We have an idea that somewhere he holds the secret of the universe. He does not hold it, but is himself the open secret. No one is so visible, but a secret he remains; and it is this sphinx-like secrecy itself, as much as his greatness, that makes the fascination so hard to resist. This difficulty will meet us again and again throughout this book, and ever increases with time; but for all this we must not suffer ourselves to be beguiled altogether out of our course.

In this chapter, however, we cannot turn away from him, for his growth under Herder's influence remains the greatest of Herder's works. In Herder he met for the first time a man who was then undoubtedly his superior, both in knowledge and insight into life; a man of high and self-determined spirit, not afraid to contradict, nor doubtful of his ground. The effect of the intercourse was deep and lasting, though for the time grievous, like all chastening. Goethe was in danger of spreading out on all sides like a lagoon, which yet seems shallow rather than broad; and in Herder he found a force that drove him into the deep channel of poetry and life. By Herder, whom he himself describes as "the sworn foe of all sham and ostentation,"¹ he was saved from that many-sided prettiness, which is dilettantism in its worst form. He was taught to look to the depth of things, and to see the difference between the temporal and eternal in every form of art, especially of poetry; and thus he learnt that literature and life are grave realities, not playthings to amuse for a moment, and that the thought of the world is not a meaningless term. What Goethe would have been without this influence it is of course impossible to say; he might have

¹ *Aus meinem Leben*, book x. which is also the foundation of the rest of this chapter.

been a great painter or man of science, or only a lawyer or curator at a museum; it is at least certain that he could not have been what he was, and the difference that this would have implied in European thought cannot be calculated. It was Herder with his deep insight into life and history, his efforts after unity of aim and earnest concentration, who thus harshly pruned the luxuriant reed, and made a poet out of a man.

It is a very strange thing that Herder, who from Nantes had spoken with some praise of his rather wooden Swedish comrade, makes no mention whatever of the "son of Maia," now seated at his side, in his letters to Darmstadt, till after he had left Strassburg, and Goethe had become acquainted with Karoline in person. It was then that he wrote the sentence which has caused critics so much perplexity: "Goethe is a good child, only rather light and sparrow-like." For the story of the intercourse we must therefore go to Goethe himself, as he has written it in the second part of *Aus meinem Leben*, the tenth book. The passage is too well known and accessible to be quoted in full, but the beginning is so graphic and true that it cannot be omitted, especially as we have otherwise not much idea what Herder looked like at this time, for there is no portrait of him at so young an age.

Our society, so soon as his presence there was known, felt a strong wish to get near him; which happiness, quite unexpectedly and by chance, befell me first. I had gone to the hotel *zum Geist*, visiting I forget what stranger of rank. Just at the bottom of the stairs I came upon a man, like myself about to ascend, whom by his look I could take to be a clergyman. His powdered hair was fastened up into a round lock, the black coat also distinguished him; still more a long black silk mantle, the end of which he had gathered together and stuck into his pocket. This in some measure surprising, yet on the whole gallant and pleasing figure, of whom I had already heard speak, left me no doubt that it was the famed traveller (arrival, rather, as we say); and my address soon convinced him that he was known to me. He asked my name, which could not be of any significance to him; however, my openness seemed to give pleasure, for he replied to it in a friendly style, and as we stepped upstairs forthwith showed himself ready for a lively communication. I have forgotten whom we visited (Carlyle's translation is here wrong); anyhow, before separating I

begged permission to wait upon himself, which he kindly enough accorded me. I delayed not to make repeated use of this preferment, and was more and more attracted towards him. He had something softish in manner, which was fit and dignified, without strictly being bred (*adrett*).¹ A round face, a fine brow, a somewhat short blunt nose, a somewhat projected (pouting), yet highly-characteristic, pleasant, amiable mouth. Under black eyebrows a pair of coal-black eyes, which failed not of their effect, though one of them was wont to be red and inflamed.² By various questions he tried to make himself acquainted with me and my circumstances, and his power of attraction influenced me more and more strongly.

To this description we must in these days add that Herder was always clean-shaven, as became a son of the Muses.

The intimacy quickly grew to be very close; Goethe tells us that he visited the sick-chamber every morning and evening (except, we must suppose, when he was wandering through the free country, or wooing Frederika in idyllic Sesenheim), that he often stayed with Herder whole days, and was generally present at the operations, in which he took much interest, for he had characteristically hardened himself to surgery, and could be of some service. A great change was passing over him during these "wonderful and happy days, so full of dim promise for the future." "New vistas," he goes on, "opened to my sight every day, nay, every hour. . . . The more I swallowed, the more Herder had to give. . . . He imparted to me the germs of all that he carried out in after-life." In his old age Goethe said with the calm humility of genius and the truth of humility, "If I could tell all I owe to my great predecessors there would be very little left;" and the account in *Aus meinem Leben*, written also in old age, leaves us no doubt that to Herder he owed one of the very strongest impulses of his life. Herder was to him at this time what Italy is generally said to have been nearly twenty years later. With youthful openness Goethe "trusted him in everything," and would not let himself be shaken off by a repulse. "I accustomed myself to his fault-

¹ *Adrett* is "wide-awake" or "well-drilled" in mind, rather than well-bred.

² Carlyle's translation, *Miscellaneous Essays*, vol. iv. p. 165.

finding," he says. For, indeed, the intercourse was not all sunshine. Goethe soon observed that this man had a repellent side to his nature, which got the upper hand sometimes, and took the form of bitter sarcasms and banterings, descending occasionally to downright rudeness. No doubt much of this is to be attributed to the increasing pain and weariness of those dreary months of winter, and Goethe is the first to admit this himself.

This is often so in our life, and we are apt not sufficiently to consider the moral effect of a morbid bodily condition; and hence we judge many characters very unfairly, because we take all men for healthy, and require of them that they behave in such wise.¹

But, beyond this, there was always a love of contradiction in Herder, a tendency to find fault and criticise and set people straight, that continued in spite of Karoline's sharp lesson, and was, of course, more trying to men than to women. Aggravated by self-distrust and a too-sensitive temperament, this resulted in those biting phrases and unpleasing jeers which come rather of shyness than ill-nature. For it is the shy man that is rude. To Goethe this "repellent" side of Herder's nature was more apparent than to others. For hitherto Goethe had lived something the life of a spoilt child. Received with applause by every one, from his father downwards, he was well content with himself and the rest of the world, and was fast slipping into the live-and-let-live style of easy complacency. "But Herder did not spare me," and, indeed, it was well. Of no period of Goethe's life was the line with which he begins his story more true: *ὁ μὴ δαρεῖς ἄνθρωπος οὐ παιδεύεται* ("He never went to school who was not thrashed;" or, more beautifully, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth"). He came to Herder with the faults of a wayward child, and Herder had, unfortunately, never had time for childishness. We remember how he used to creep about, silent and still, "never shouting and leaping," and now he was face to face with a radiant youth who seemed to be hopping wantonly hither and thither "like a

¹ *Aus meinem Leben*, book x.

sparrow"; who by his wild ways and unrestrained spirits in these years startled certain sober personages, till they thought "the fellow could only be half-witted."

No wonder there seemed to be some want of strength and reality in Goethe's past; his aims were divided; his culture threatened to lose itself in the vapourings of literary and artistic pursuits. He seemed quite content to go on writing *Occasional Poems* and imitations, *Anacreontics*, and hymns. The brain that was to give us *Faust* had as yet only produced the *Laune der Verliebten* (Lovers' Humours) and the *Mitschuldigen* (Guilty, One and All), besides a few other pieces not preserved, all modelled on the French pattern with a touch of Lessing. In Leipzig he had learnt to engrave on copper, in Frankfort he had gone "far into dark regions with that mystic-religious-chemical business," and now in Strassburg he was studying anatomy rather than law. He seemed to like everything indifferently; he was quite pleased with Gellert and Weisse; Wieland seemed truly Greek. Having no basis for criticism he was unsure of his own judgment. He collected seals, took delight in the bindings of his books, and admired the painter Domenico Feti. Triviality was the danger of Goethe's life. From his father he had inherited a taste for hobbies, and had he not been thrilled through with the imagination of his mother he might easily have degenerated into an antiquary or collector of specimens. Seeing no greatness in Germany, nor in German life, he was turned in upon himself and his little circles of acquaintances. And yet at times he was tormented by the indescribable restlessness of genius that cannot find its channel.

There was a further reason for Herder's sharpness. He himself, too, had just been passing through a critical stage; he looked back upon his past life as a thing of mere humours, whims, and random bits of work; he determined now to steady himself and brace his energies together. In his letters he writes that he hopes he is becoming calmer, more stable—less French and more British. And now in Goethe he saw in an

exaggerated degree all the faults from which he was himself trying to escape. In reproving Goethe, therefore, he was reproving himself, and this made him violent and intense. The highly-valued seal-collection was laughed to scorn; the beautiful bindings and Domenico Feti were held up to ridicule in verses that fell short of politeness. A blustering power had been admitted into the sanctuary of Goethe's pet deities, and many a Dagon fell flat on its face. "Very few stars of importance were left in my heaven." Herder showed him the pettiness of all German literature hitherto since the great days of old; even Klopstock and Wieland were not spared. Against the French he was ruthless; they were all stiff and elegant and out of date; even Voltaire was a thing of the past. When Goethe spoke of his favourite Ovid, Herder forced him to see how false and artificial he was—neither Greek nor Italian—how unworthy of the name of poet. In the bewilderment of these reproofs and the twilight of his boyhood's gods, Goethe lost something of his frankness, and became more and more reserved; and it was this, perhaps, that blinded Herder to his true worth. He said no word of Frederika and happy Sesenheim, no word of his cabalistic gropings, nor, so he tells us, of the dim visions of Faust and Götz that were beginning to flit through his mind in these months; but this last point is very doubtful.

Yet Herder's teaching was not confined to negations; he could do more than destroy. We see from his letters at this time, and from his criticisms on his own verses, that he was himself gaining a clearer insight into life, and especially into the depths of poetry. He introduced Goethe to the true Greek life as it actually was lived, as opposed to the false classicism of the day; he introduced him to his own master Hamann, to the English, to Swift and Sterne and Goldsmith and Ossian, and, above all, to Shakespeare, in his omnipotent completeness, before this only known to Goethe through a book of extracts. For the first two months of his stay in Strassburg Herder was busy with theories about the book of Genesis and the early history of the world, intending to complete that work on Hebrew archæology,

which we saw begun in Riga. All these theories, together with his views on the importance and beauty of primitive poetry and a nation's ballads, were imparted to Goethe, and "made him acquainted with poetry from a quite different side." "He taught me," says Goethe, "that the poet's art was a world-gift, a gift to the nations, not a private inheritance of a few polite and cultivated men."

If we could put ourselves back to the middle of the last century in Germany, we should see how vast was the revelation contained in those words.¹ In another place Goethe says, "I was as a blind man restored to sight"; and again, "He tore from my eyes the veil that hid the poverty of all our contemporary literature, and I looked out upon life as it were from a higher place of knowledge." These are strong words, coming as they do from Goethe in old age, at the height of European fame, when there was no longer any comparison between the intellectual position of the two, so completely had it been reversed; when indeed Herder had gone to his rest, his life-work done. Yet they probably fall short of the truth. If we would discover the real meaning of Herder's influence we must go rather to Goethe's letters and the letters of his friends during these and the few next months, or even years.

Or, better still, we must turn in upon ourselves and imagine how it must have been with Goethe. For to most of us, perhaps in early manhood, before we are stupefied by self-seeking and knowledge and experience, there comes a time when our eyes are opened to the depth and beauty of life and art and poetry; it may be only by some man's printed thought—Wordsworth's, or Emerson's, or Ruskin's; it may be—and this is stronger—by the looks and life and words of some other, by the hearth, or with us in the fields. Just this small change and the whole world is new. The man is as heaven-sent. We must all remain ourselves, lonely, self-centred: but this much can another do for us, and in this is all. Then it is with us as though we

¹ And yet Pope said almost the same.

had been lying on a mountain-side, enwrappt in sullen mist—total eclipse, no light, no sun; but of a sudden the veil is rent, and far out in front, perfectly beautiful, endlessly wide, full of dim promise, the hills and waters and pleasant valleys of the world glimmer in hues unseen before, perhaps never to be seen again.

The main theory of Herder's *Plastik* seems to have been discussed between the two, for the next year Goethe writes, "I understand it all now; I shut my eyes and grope." But Herder found it impossible, in spite of Hartknoch's entreaties, to continue the work in a place like Strassburg, and, after some weeks of speculation on the book of Genesis, he suddenly determined to compete for the prize offered by the Berlin Academy for the best essay on the theme, "Was mankind capable of inventing language if left to his own resources, and by what means could he have invented it of himself?" The essays had to be given in by the 1st of January, and it must have been well on in December when Herder began. But the subject had long been in his mind, and as he was not hampered by books the essay was finished by Christmas. The theme was too distinct to allow him to wander, and the time too short to allow him to re-write. There is, therefore, a directness and ease about this treatise that is too often wanting in his other works. There were three solutions of the question generally prevalent at the time, supported by three different parties; the orthodox, headed by Süssmilch, maintained that man had been taught to speak directly by the Deity, thus making God, as Goethe says, a kind of omnipotent school-master. The German Rationalists, on the other hand, supposed that man had instituted speech himself by a kind of agreement or dogmatic form. The French and English "Naturalists," again, argued that articulate speech must have grown out of the howls and cries of wild beasts.¹ Herder inclines to the last view, showing how unscientific the other two are (for to account for the origin of

¹ For the modern development of this theory see Darwin's *Descent of Man*, vol. i. pp. 53-62 (1871).

language they assume it already existing); but at the same time, according to him, man has a further gift than any other animal, for how is it that none other has developed articulate speech?

The narrower the circle of a creature's action the greater is its peculiar instinct or innate art; but man, being born to the fullest freedom and most universal sphere of action, has very little instinct, but a peculiar characteristic of consciousness of his aims and of himself, the power of understanding, or, as Herder generally calls it, "reflexion." By this "reflexion" speech is at once necessitated; one cannot be said to exist without the other. Herder even goes so far as to say, that, assuming the power of "reflexion," a man would learn speech even though he were quite alone, for thought itself is a form of conversation. This faculty of speech immediately dependent on the power of reflexion is further aided by the countless sounds of nature conveyed through the mediate sense of hearing, which Herder discusses at some length. The consideration of the origin of language leads him to the time when, as Hamann said, all speech was poetry, and this to the endless varieties into which language has developed amongst the nations, "till it has become a Proteus on the round superficies of the world," and each separate tongue is "a treasure-house of human thought, to which each has contributed according to his nature."

Before sending the essay to Berlin, where in time it received the prize, Herder gave it to Goethe to read. "As he wrote a very clear hand," says Goethe, "the manuscript, loosely stitched together, was easily got through." This "clear hand" recalls Mohrunge and Herder's slavery as copyist to Trescho. Goethe confesses that the subject was quite new to him, and the question seemed rather superfluous.

For, if man was of divine origin, so was language; and, if man must be regarded in the circle of nature, language must also be natural. Still, I read the treatise with great pleasure and to my especial edification. The fat surgeon (Pegelow) had less patience; he humorously declined to have anything to do with the prize essay, asserting that he could not manage to think on such abstract questions. *L'hombre*, which we generally played together of an evening, appealed to him more.

From this essay we can form some idea of the subject of the conversations that had sufficient attraction to keep a man like Goethe imprisoned in a sick-room day after day. The dim beginnings of human endeavour, the true significance of poetry

and song, the strange mythology of the early East, the cold-hearted pedantry of the eighteenth century and its makers of verse, all this was revealed to him for the first time. But to supplement this essay we must turn to another book, or rather collection of "flying leaves," which was not written till some months after this, and was at length published in 1773, under the title *On German Style and Art*. It contains a "correspondence" on Ossian and an essay on Shakespeare, both by Herder, together with Goethe's treatise on Gothic architecture, and a sketch of German history by Möser, and may be said to be the first definite protest on behalf of that mediæval revival which has led us to Pusey and his company on the one side, and to Burne-Jones and Morris on the other. There can be no doubt, both from internal evidence and from what Goethe has said, that the subjects of these essays were fully talked over during those winter days in Strassburg, so that this mention of them falls best here.

From Herder's letters to Darmstadt at this time we see that under the influence of love he was more than ever attracted to the one poetry that is universal—the simple outpourings of the human heart in its joy and sorrow, the lovely lyrics which, as Heine says, sing to us like the nightingales from spring to spring. He perceived more clearly than hitherto, that, though a man speak with the tongue of men and angels, and have not passion or depth of feeling, he is but sounding brass. Feeling his own lack of this creative power, the great miracle given among men, and perhaps too sick and dispirited to make more than an occasional attempt, he fills his letters more and more with translations from the true poets of other lands, executed with that skill which in this kind never failed him. He translated the ballads in Shakespeare's plays, and hints that after all the rude Laplander, who sings to his reindeer speeding over the snow to his loved one's dwelling, may be a truer poet than Major Kleist. He even thought of making a collection of true songs and lyrics from all tongues, including apparently passages of lyrical or idyllic prose. For this purpose he urged Goethe to

seek out any relics of national poetry that might still linger in Elsass, and we see here the germ of the plan that was to be fulfilled in the course of years. At the same time he was careful to distinguish between a merely antiquarian interest in ballads and a genuine enthusiasm for all natural poetry as being universal; for all true songs are the same. His hatred of all coldness and convention was now at its height. If he went to England, he writes, he would of course like to see "Garrik" and Hume, but would rather hie him away to the hills of Scotland and Wales; "my Eden would be a Celtic hut on a rough mountain in frost and snow and cloud." He was also smitten by "a frenzy for Shakespeare," as he writes to Karoline, "each of whose plays is a complete philosophy on some passion," and the fire was kept hot by his indignation at Wieland's recent Frenchified rendering. All these things he poured into Goethe's willing ears, and at length gathered up in the little book *On German Style and Art*.

The letters on Ossian begin with a criticism on Denis, who had translated the production of "the impudent Scotchman," as Wordsworth calls Macpherson, into German hexameters. After showing how absurd it is to separate the sense of a poem from its form, Herder proceeds to consider or rather extol the merits of ballads and national poetry in general. He hopes that his readers will not laugh at him for his enthusiasm for savages, as Voltaire laughed at Rousseau, because the thought of going on all fours pleased him so well. He himself is far from looking on civilisation with suspicion, "for the human race is destined to advance from scene to scene, and to progress in culture and morals." Still there is a touch of beauty in the old songs which is missing in the eighteenth century. As instances, Herder quotes some of his own admirable renderings of Scandinavian, Scotch, and English ballads in their original metres, together with some old German popular songs, amongst others the well-known *Röslein auf der Heiden*, in its first form, generally attributed to Goethe. The conclusion of the whole matter is that we must return to nature, for at present "we work according to

rules that no genius will recognise as rules of nature ; we make verses on subjects about which we cannot think, still less feel, still less imagine ; we polish up passions which we have not got, and imitate strength of soul which we never possessed, and in the end all is falsehood, weakness, artifice. Poetry, which should be the most stormy and yet most self-assured of the daughters of the human soul, has become the most uncertain, the lamest, the most hesitating ; poems have become polite, like the repeatedly corrected exercises of boys at schools." With this conclusion any one who has felt that "the Jolly Beggars," or "the Lines written on the Wye," are worth all the epigrams and moralities of Pope, Young, Shenstone, and the rest put together, will readily agree.

✓ "Whoever would have an idea of the estimation in which Shakespeare was held by us young men during that time" (during the *Sturm und Drang* period, that is), writes Goethe in *Aus meinem Leben*, "should read Herder's treatise in the book *On German Style and Art*"; and should also read the essay on Shakespeare which Goethe himself delivered to the little circle of friends about the same time. Lessing and Gerstenberg had hitherto been the defenders of Shakespeare in Germany, whilst Garrick was standing, as Herder says, "like his guardian angel" in England. The attacks from which "the great barbarian" had to be defended, the servile worship of the Greeks and Aristotle's rules and unities, the still more servile practice of the French dramas and the plays built on the Greek model, all this has become very strange to us now, though occasionally we hear echoes of it lingering in some belated brain. But Herder was the first to stand up and boldly declare that Shakespeare could no longer be treated like a clever prisoner on his trial, but was the great king of poetry, enthroned for ever on her highest seat, and to him must all men do homage in reverence and thankful humility. Herder follows his invariable rule of criticism in showing that, though Shakespeare in a sense may be called the brother of Sophocles, it is absurd to measure the one against the other, seeing that the conditions of poetry, and especially of the

drama, were entirely different in Greece and in Northern Europe. The grounds of his eulogy are chiefly derived from *Lear*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, and *Hamlet*. If fault is to be found with the treatise, it is that Herder does not take the actual stage into consideration. There was very little of the true dramatic spirit in him, as we have seen, and this want is perhaps one of the reasons that his pupil Goethe did not give us a great acting drama in *Götz*, nor indeed throughout his life. "When I begin to read," Herder says, "all thoughts of the stage and its apparatus vanish." He seems to regard these plays rather as stories or epics than dramas, and, when we remember that such men as Charles Lamb and Emerson did not enjoy Shakespeare on the stage, we begin to wonder whether Herder was not right, till we go to the theatre again.¹ We need not here notice Goethe's treatise on Gothic architecture which followed the article on Shakespeare, and was the product of the influence of Herder and Strassburg cathedral on his mind. He maintained that the Gothic should rather be called German, and that it was absurd to compare it with the classic, which was suited to a different climate and different modes of thought; but it must be observed how completely Goethe has imitated the style of Herder or even of Hamann, an imitation which, together with the substance of the essay, he regretted in his old age.

The only other remarkable man that Herder seems to have met in Strassburg was Jung-Stilling, who was introduced to him by Goethe. He had come to Strassburg the same winter, having abandoned the professions of charcoal-burner and tailor in turn, and was now studying the eye under Lobstein, being at last sure of his true calling. In spite of his quiet mysticism and the power of seeing visions which ran in his family, he was at once seized with profound admiration for Herder. In his own account he says:—

¹ There was indeed the same want of the true dramatic faculty in all these three, in spite of their critical acuteness. It seems to me significant that the highest work of all of them, except perhaps the *Ideen*, took the form of essays, more or less lyrical and "subjective."

I had never admired any one so much in my life as this man. Herder has only one thought, and that is the whole world. He was to me, as it were, an outline of all in one ; and, if ever a spirit has received an impulse to perpetual motion, that did I from him, all the more because my temper harmonised better with this sublime genius than with Goethe.¹

Still Goethe continued to be Herder's chief companion ; for in the next summer Herder writes, "Goethe alone visited me in my imprisonment, and he was the only person I was always glad to see." But by the beginning of April his imprisonment was to end. The doctors were afraid to do any more, and the wound was allowed to heal. After all this expense and torture he was no better, and the joyful return he had pictured was never to come. Still he was free and could get clear of this miserable Strassburg ; he borrowed some money of Goethe and hastened northwards through Karlsruhe again to happy Darmstadt.

The greatest work of Herder's life was done.

By the time he left Strassburg the strange, and in its day glorious, movement of Storm and Stress foreshadowed in the *Fragments* had fairly set in. It is needless here to follow its well-known course. For English readers part of the story is told by Mr. Lewes with a certain flashing brilliancy, and the heart of the matter has been laid bare by Carlyle in his early writings. For us it is only important to observe how the whole course of Herder's previous life seems as though it had been specially ordained to lead to this consummation ; the working-force of Nature (if we must personify), with whips and blandishments, had urged him inevitably along this road, for she had need of him. Looking back we remember Mohrungeu, with its lakes and forests and church with "horned pinnacles," and the earnestness of life. Then we saw Königsberg, and the glad freedom and reality in the teachings of Hamann and Kant ; then the oppressions of convention and a limited life in Riga, and the joys that rebellion has for a fearless and sincere soul both in life

¹ Stilling's *Wanderschaft*, p. 149, quoted in the *Lebensbild*, vol. iii. p. 396.

and literature ; next the sharp contrast of the sea that makes all common life of small account ; France with her hard glitter of polite ways and artificial grace, her literature “elegant and antiquated,” her philosophy “sad, atheistic, unnatural” ; and, above all, those crowning days in Darmstadt, when he was brought face to face with Nature in her most untrammelled form, with the force that eternally gives the lie to convention, the second universal, that stands alone between birth and death. This was the inevitable training of the man who was to direct the form taken in Germany by that great spirit of revolution which renewed the face of Europe.

Even whilst Herder was still in Strassburg, Goethe had become a German, or, as Herder calls it, “a Briton” ; his Emilia and Lucinda, the French dancing-master’s daughters, had been exchanged for German Frederika. Werther and Götz, and the beginnings of Faust, the highest, perhaps the only artistic expressions of this period of Storm and Stress, were quickly to follow in the place of the *Mitschuldigen*. Already the Strassburg circle of friends looked with contempt on everything that was French or elegant. Germany had begun to have a right to exist ; she had entered on the path that in a century was to lead her in very unexpected directions. The seed sown in Strassburg spread rapidly through the length and breadth of the Rhine-land northwards, and to Zurich in the south. The ice of two centuries of winters since Luther’s day was breaking up, and the waters flowed warm though turbid for the time. The watchwords of the party were nature, originality, youth, the worship of Shakespeare, rebellion against convention, and the right of genius to live its own life. It is given to everyone to hope that on some one point he too may be a genius. The youth of Germany at all events had little hesitation as to their claim, and, supposing that to be original was to be eccentric, and to be a poet was to be sentimental, they launched out into long hair and nakedness, moonbeams and feudal castles, suicide and glooms of blighted love, till of them, too, the earth was at length weary. Genius finding itself considerably limited in

the world, cramped by the petty sameness of the daily round, finding that it can be nothing, or at best but one thing, where it would fain be all, is apt to cry out and throw itself into the strange postures—some beautiful, some grotesque—that fascinate or alarm the unwary.

This protest of the infinite spirit seems to accompany or precede any great advance in human thought almost as surely as “a return to nature.” Indeed it is part of a return to nature, a rebellion against dead conventions. In one country it takes the form of Burns, Wordsworth, Byron, and Reform; in another, of Rousseau, the guillotine, and Napoleon; in a third, of Herder, Goethe, and Kant’s philosophy. For a time things are distract, people seem to go mad, thought staggers like a drunken man, or revolves like a whirlpool. But that is the way of the progress of the human spirit. It speaks by contradictions, it publishes itself in paradox, it advances by tacks like a ship against the wind. This is the beauty of error; this is the truth of extremes; and those who, by distance of time or loftiness of soul, are raised above the gasps and madness of the hour, tell us that from their height after all the course looks straight and the progress sure. When the brains are out the man is dead, in spite of all ghosts; and when a form of convention is dead, though we need not wax hot and stick daggers in the corpse, yet we may join in the general rejoicings, and must not be alarmed if some people grow too merry at the tragi-comedy of the wake.

CHAPTER X.

BÜCKEBURG, 1771—1773.

“ The madman saith, He said so : it is strange.”

AN EPISTLE OF KARSHISH

“ There is no last nor first.

Say not, ‘ a small event ! ’ Why ‘ small ’ ?

Costs it more pain that this, ye call

A ‘ great event,’ should come to pass

Than that ? ”

PIPPA PASSES.

WITH the arrival in Darmstadt Herder's *Lebensbild*—the collection of his early letters, unpublished writings, and general information as to his life hitherto—unhappily breaks off ; so that henceforth we must depend almost entirely on the *Reminiscences* and his published correspondence and works, all of which indeed are sufficient as far as quantity goes. During the two years of which this chapter will give some account, a significant change—which some would call an advance, others a reaction—came over his mind, and he published little to the world ; but his correspondence with Karoline continued unbroken, and the letters between the two make a volume of decent growth. He also began or renewed an intercourse with other noteworthy personalities of the time, whose influence on his mind must be noticed as briefly as is fit.

We can imagine the joyful hopes with which Herder saw once more the woods and streets of Darmstadt, full of the happy memories of six months ago. But deliberate pleasures always fall short, and the few days spent in the well-known circle were days of uneasiness and disappointment. As the betrothal was not generally known, and was kept a close secret from Karoline's

brother-in-law, Herder had to stay in a hotel, and the whole party felt themselves in a false position. Of Merck we hear nothing, but he seems already to have become rather indifferent to his friend; at all events, a chill seems to have been thrown over the circle, and harmony could not be restored, partly, no doubt, because, when the first meeting has been enthusiastic and open-hearted, the second is generally cold and restrained, for people are on their guard, afraid lest they should have committed themselves too far, and no longer feeling the first thrill of novelty and the excitement of discovery. But the chief agent of the deaf and dumb devil in this case seems to have been Leuchsenring, the founder and perhaps the only member of the Order of Sentimentality, whom we once met for a few days at Leyden, and meet now again without joy, though with some amusement; for he is the original of Pater Brey in Goethe's little carnival-play, and will serve us as a type of the sickness with which so many were sick in those days.

Sentimentality was an element necessary for the growth of the storm that was gathering. For good or evil it was in the air; and neither Herder, nor even Goethe, at this time could entirely free themselves from its influence. We have seen how Herder had been struggling against this, together with all other unrealities, and now he was brought face to face with a great apostle of the cult. Sentiment was to be religion, nothing less; and Leuchsenring, having no fixed business in the world to keep him better employed, went wandering from place to place as tutor, hofmeister, or nothing at all, preaching the gospel of the Idealism of Tenderness, "pressing the hands of hundreds of girls, and sweet boys, and other dear little people,"¹ leading captive silly men and silly women by his tender discourse on Friendship and the Heart. He was the embodiment of the doctrine so rudely contradicted by the young Goethe, that the office of nature is to reduce a man to perfect softness. Such people had not strength to sigh like a furnace nor weep like a water-

¹ *Aus Herder's Nachlass*, vol. iii. containing his correspondence with Karoline during these years. It is the basis of this chapter.

spout; their sighs were gentle and their tears tender. Leuchsenring, Goethe tells us, had no reality in himself, he depended on his acquaintance and friendships for importance;¹ and it is a sign of this, that he always travelled about with hosts of letters securely locked up in caskets, which dear letters, as well as certain sainted volumes that had been presented to him, he would reverently read aloud to any circle or "brotherhood" that was sufficiently select and religious; the plague of sentimental letter-writing being at that time sadly prevalent, as the historian knows only too well. This sentiment, indeed, was the popular panacea, the "Morrison's Pill"² of the day, and it served its purpose as well as universal suffrage, education, culture, the worship of the beautiful, the Church, socialism, or any other of the kind. Thus we find that Goethe's Pater Brey has a nostrum for all the woes of man, would be glad to govern the world himself, would chalk over the ugly places, would make Jews, Turks, and infidels love each other as the little lambs in May:

"Curses because without asking his pleasure
The sun his daily course doth measure."

This "phantom of humanity," as Herder calls him, continued to haunt Darmstadt and the Rhine-land for a few years, though mercilessly exposed by Merck and jeered at by Goethe, whom nevertheless Leuchsenring did not cease to admire; that at least must be said in his honour. Afterwards he flitted round Schiller for a time, and made friends with Nicolai and the Berlin circle, founding countless orders and brotherhoods, and causing much annoyance to friends and enemies alike. Next it entered his head that Rome and the Jesuits were the root of all evil, and he began to snuff a Popish plot in everything. His suspicions seemed verified when, years afterwards, at the beginning of this century, the Holy Mother again raised her head for a moment, to the astonishment of creation, and swallowed down Friedrich Schlegel and so many other of the greatest souls in

¹ *Aus meinem Leben*, book xiii.

² Carlyle's *Past and Present*.

Germany. But, at the beginning of the Revolution, Leuchsenring had taken himself a wife ("a marriage made in hell," F. Schlegel calls it), and gone to live in Paris, thus falling out of German history. Of this apostle of tenderness we will only say further, that, when he was visited in his old age by Schlegel, he produced for his guest's perusal a "Diary of the Abominations of my Wife," and that, after tottering about the Bois de Boulogne day after day for a long time, he died (in 1827) in utter loneliness, three years before Heine reached Paris.¹

Such was the critic before whom the two lovers had to comport themselves; no wonder they found it a hard matter to come up to his standard. He had made the study of the Heart the business of his life, and his judgments were oracular, infallible. When he met Herder in Leyden he had drawn, as Herder says, a "milk-and-water portrait" of him, and now his sensibilities were sorely shocked at the disappointment. He whispered into the ears of silly women, perhaps even to Karoline herself, that Herder's behaviour was not at all the right thing; that he was too cold and quiet, and talked too much about books; that he did not sigh and cry enough; in fact, that he was not properly in love, according to the love-laws of Leuchsenring and Jacobi, Gleim's favourite, the pet poet of the sentimentalists. For the rest, Leuchsenring slid among the party, silent and white, like a tender ghost, filling the hearts of all with chill suspicion.

Even we must wonder that Herder did not either confute this creature, or at all events boldly announce his betrothal, and thus, taking his stand on his instincts, wait for the whole huge world, including the impetuous Privy-Councillor, to come round to him, as Emerson assures us it will. But he had not enough determination for this; he was in debt, especially to Hartknoch and Goethe; Karoline was poor; the future seemed altogether too uncertain. He had been so long accustomed to changes, that he could hardly believe in permanency. It is possible, too,

¹ See Varnhagen v. Ense, *Denkwürdigkeiten und vermischte Schriften*, Band iv. 170 ff.

that he foresaw something of the disadvantage of having a double existence before his own individuality was firmly established. As for Leuchsenring, he had made the mistake of most idle persons in supposing that marrying and getting in marriage was the main business of life, and he could not understand a man who had no time to play at tenderness and weep the tears of sentiment. The lovers were never alone, though Herder was conducted to visit her chamber; and after he is gone she can still see him sitting on the chair by her bed, or turning over the books on her little altar of a table, or looking through a telescope at Mainz far across the Rhine. The days so fondly expected passed in cold disappointment, and Herder once more mounted the postchaise, and drove from Darmstadt, northwards this time, leaving Karoline "stretched on his bed in floods of tears"; from which it seems probable that he had moved from the hotel to Merck's house.

At Frankfurt Herder visited the Goethe family, but unhappily we know nothing as to his opinion of the father and mother, and only learn from a letter of Goethe's that he had some conversation with the wonderful sister, and sang to her the praises of Wolfgang. He passed through Cassel without seeing any one; and late in April he drove through the hills and forests into Bückeburg, where he was received by Westfeld. For months he had been impatiently awaited by the Count and Westfeld, who, indeed, had been the main instrument in bringing him there at all. We may imagine, then, the poor prime-minister's astonishment when the new *consistorialrath* (consistory-councillor) of a North-German town with sober views of decency, arrived in "a sky-blue coat embroidered with gold, a white waistcoat, and a white hat."¹ His perplexity was further increased because the count, whom he knew to be an austere man, had ordered that Herder should be brought to him the moment he arrived, an order with which Herder flatly refused to comply

¹ This passage is omitted from Westfeld's account in my edition of the *Reminiscences*, and I give it on Haym's authority, vol. i. part ii. p. 459.

till he had made his toilette with the aid of barber and hair-dresser, who had left their shops in the afternoon, and gone to their dim places of recreation. The consequence was that the count was kept waiting till nine o'clock in the evening, and received Herder with a marked coldness, that long affected the relations between the two. To appreciate how grievous the offence was in the eyes of the count, and also to understand Herder's general position for the next few years, we must obtain some idea of this man as he was. The account in the *Reminiscences* is very full,¹ and there is much in him that is typical of the times; much, too, of human interest; at all events, he will be refreshing after the sucking-dove Leuchsenring.

This is Wilhelm, Count of Bückeburg, or of Lippe, or of both, or of Schaumburg-Lippe, whom we have met in Carlyle's *Friedrich*, "stalking loftily through this puddle of a world on terms of his own"; this is he who gave a dinner in his tent, and, when asked by his guests what was that strange whiffing over their heads, replied that he had given his artillery orders to practise against his tent-pole, but, alas! there was no chance of their hitting it.² He was twenty years older than Herder, and was the second son of a natural daughter of George I. of England, who bare him in London to the fantastic and immoral spendthrift Count of Bückeburg, who introduced Frederick to freemasonry. Brought up in England, the young Wilhelm had, "like all rich Englishmen, lived only for the morrow."³ There were endless stories about his recklessness and mad wagers; how he had once journeyed through the land as a beggar, and again had ridden from London to Edinburgh sitting backwards on his horse, a mode of progression that even in mad England must have attracted remark. We note with sorrow that till late in life visits from parties of young Englishmen would cause these fits of insanity to recur, to the scandal of reasonable Bückeburg.

¹ See also Varnhagen v. Euse, *Biographische Denkmale*, Band i. p. 1, ff.

² Carlyle's *Frederick*, vol. vi. pp. 164-165.

³ This is Westfeld's account of the youth of England, *Reminiscences*, vol. i. p. 276.

Still, we are told that he acquired something of that "nobility of tone which belongs to the upper classes in England." He never mastered the German tongue perfectly, though he spoke French, Italian, and Portuguese, and had travelled throughout Europe from Turkey to Portugal. On the death of his elder brother he was obliged to live for a time in Bückeburg, an indignant witness of his father's extravagance and the barbarous ceremony of the old German courts; a witness, too, of the insatiate greed of his father's mistress, a "Countess Bentink, from England," and of his poor stupid step-mother's sullen despair. He served at Dettingen the year before Herder was born; and at twenty-four, on the death of his father, he did for Bückeburg—in a still more rigorous style—what Friedrich Wilhelm I. had done for Prussia, when "the expensive Herr" died.¹ The step-mother, for whom Herder had no favour, retired to a castle of her own; the light Countess Bentinck flitted home over seas; the councillors of the father were sent packing; new councillors were appointed—councillors in name only, for we read that Wilhelm "never took advice of any one"; the lovely pleasure-houses were torn down, the ruins being left as a memorial or warning to all who passed by; the fine furniture was sold. Wilhelm would rule by his own might, and make of little Bückeburg a great military power. After another interval of travel to gain experience, he returned in 1753, and the work began in earnest. A sixteenth part of the whole population became soldiers, and, by infinite exertion in the way of drilling and military schools, he was ready when the Seven Years' War came on. "Hanover was obliged to ally herself to me," he proudly said; and as commander of the Allied artillery he did notable service under Ferdinand of Brunswick; would have been in Ferdinand's place, say some, if he had not insisted on taking the world on his own terms.²

Perhaps sick of the ineptitude he found in a camp where

¹ Carlyle's *Frederick*, vol. i. book iv. chap. iii.

² *Ibid.* vol. vi. p. 164.

guests may have objected to artillery practice at their tent-pole, he had retired to Bückeburg, when France, to drive a thorn into Pitt's side, prevailed on Spain to declare war against helpless Portugal. England, in spite of the disaster of Pitt's resignation, had sense enough to send for the Count to command the English and the Portuguese forces, or rather, to create the army. Never was man in more difficult position; victory was impossible; but what indomitable energy and silent strength could do against hopeless confusion, unreadiness (except for Pitt's share), and miserable national jealousies, was done.¹ At the peace he came home, and characteristically offered marriage to a woman he had never seen, on the strength of a letter from her to her brother. She became his Countess, and we shall meet her in time. Soon after this he invited Thomas Abbt to his court, but, after a year and a quarter of pleasant intercourse on philosophy and schemes for practical government, this "friend of his heart" died, leaving the Count very desolate. How, on reading the *Torso* on Abbt, he had desired Herder to come to Bückeburg—at first with no definite appointment, then as preacher in the Lutheran church and member of the consistory—has been already told. His main object in life was still to make Bückeburg a great military power. In a large piece of water toward the north, called the Steinhuder Lake, he had built a model fortress, which he named the Wilhelmstein; this looked towards Hanover, and he maintained that every prince in poor divided Germany ought to build the like. It was nothing to him that the expense almost ruined his little state, already in a low way through his father's whims. He had given up finance as hopeless, and never much believed in salutary measures for the people, but believed very firmly in iron ramrods and a stout fortress. Accordingly, a foundation of solid masonry had to be laid in the bottom of the lake, the country around drained, the fortress when finished had constantly to be repaired, as the water rotted the stone, and provisions must be supplied to the garrison; for the place was

¹ 1761-2. Carlyle's *Frederick*, vol. vi. pp. 240-242.

kept always on a war footing. There were military schools and barracks, too, by the lake, very immoral and ill-behaved places we hear, though the Count on getting wind of this shipped the worst offenders off to Portugal straight to mend their ways.

Yet this man was not a mere military despot; was not so much like Friedrich Wilhelm with his giants as like the greater Frederick with his flute and Voltaire. He was a philosopher after his kind; and one of his main theories was that war to be justified must always be defensive. He had considerable knowledge of physics and mathematics, and yet could say whole pages of Shakespeare by heart. In Italy he had learnt music and art, and now he kept up a little *Kapelle* for music at his own expense, with Christian Bach, son of the great Sebastian, as head musician; also he had a fine collection of pictures, "including a Raphael"; and himself could draw with some skill. He read the earlier works of Kant, and took pleasure in the wit of Voltaire, but his greatest delight was in hearing of deeds of bravery; and, when he was told of the Portuguese priest who went down in a ship rather than desert his post, he was so much pleased that he "drew a picture of the scene," a picture one would like to see if it is preserved. He also enjoyed talking philosophy—eighteenth-century philosophy—with learned men; it was chiefly this that had drawn him to Abbt, and this he required of Herder. For parsons and their works he had very little respect; as we have said before, he did not believe much in "amelioration of the masses," except indeed, perhaps, like Frederick, by the way of drainage. Another point of resemblance to Frederick was that the Count, when he was ill, always managed to cure himself by the simple prescription of "silence, patience; *esperance, soumission*; that is to say, *Spes*," which he adopted as his motto in life. In figure he was tall and very strong, though lean, with a face full of intellect and earnestness, and eyes clear and sparkling; something romantic about his whole bearing; "he was like a Spanish knight, in fact a Don Quixote," we are told in the *Reminiscences*;¹ and in after-

¹ Vol. i. p. 177.

years Herder said of him that he was altogether “a hero of antiquity.”

We can see now that such a man would think very much of punctuality as of the stars of heaven, very much of obedience strict as Nature's own, and very little of neatly-powdered hair or dainty silken mantles. The meeting so long expected was undeniably cold, and the constraint lasted long; it was increased, too, according to the *Reminiscences*, by the hostile representations of a mysterious N., who happened to be on bad terms with the Count, and indeed with all the other inhabitants of the place, his wife and himself evidently considering Bückeburg far too small a sphere for such as they. By N. Westfeld himself must be signified. He was alive when the *Reminiscences* were written, and we know that Herder stayed in his house for the first few weeks, till his own place should be ready. We read, too, that N. was the only man of culture in Bückeburg except the Count; and Westfeld certainly had a fair acquaintance with literature and history, and especially of economics, for shortly after this he gained a prize for a history of some social question.

Further, to estimate fully the difficulty of friendly intercourse between Herder and the Count, we must remember Herder's old horror of “the red collar” and all things military; we must remember his nervously sensitive, almost irritable, disposition, his difficulty of decision, his slight and pliable frame. Accustomed to be honoured rather than to do homage; half dreamer, half rebel, and yet resolved in his office of teacher to work some good for the souls of men, he was now brought face to face with a nature of granite, a man who never doubted, never took advice, who demanded homage as his due, who was military-mad, who made his artillery practise at his tent-pole, who believed in no teaching but of bayonet-drill, whose knowledge was mathematical and his speculations abstract. Abbt had displayed wonderful tact in managing the Count by seeming to encourage his fixed ideas and submitting completely to his will; and yet it is hinted that even he could not have endured the position much longer when death came. To Herder all intimacy

long seemed impossible. He was glad he did not live in the castle like Abbt, and, though he occasionally dined there and was invited to the concerts in the court *Kapelle*, he considered even the pleasure of music dearly bought by enforced attention to the Count's endless disquisitions on philosophy. Sometimes he would be asked to preach at the summer residence of Baum, though the Count was of the Reformed Church and had his private chaplain, whilst Herder cured souls after the Lutheran fashion. But after service he was compelled to walk in the garden with the Count, and again obsequiously listen to his dogmatism on "mere speculation and metaphysics," satisfying to no human soul. During Herder's first year at Bückeburg, too, the Count's temper was sorely tried by disappointment, for he had confidently expected a son and heir, "certain of an uncertainty," as the *Reminiscences* say; and when a daughter came he shut himself up in his room for a whole day, and was slow to take comfort. For six months after this the Countess was away for her health's sake, and yet in the end it was the Countess who was mediator. Still the two men were not blind to each other. The Count told his wife that "Herder was a far greater man than ever Abbt had been," and he often wondered that people left him in Bückeburg so long. At the same time Herder writes to Karoline that no one in the place could understand a reasonable word but the Count and Westfeld, that the Count indeed was too great for the land, and the only pity was he was too much of a prince, and had been spoilt by servility; a reservation that shows us which way the European wind was blowing.

We shall now be able to understand the tone of despondency that pervades Herder's early letters to Karoline from Bückeburg. He was always easily downcast, and before he had been three days in the place he had made up his mind for nothing but misery; rather too hasty a conclusion, as Karoline gently suggests. For many months he feels like "a stork's nest on an altar," like St. John at Patmos, like Prometheus chained to his rock. Bückeburg is little better than a Bastille; for the first time in his life we see him completely cut off from sympathetic

converse, the Count being such as we have heard, and but little profit to be had of Westfeld with his political economics. The rest of the population consisted entirely of tradespeople and the military, both classes blind to all else but their craft. Herder also complains of a wandering tribe of rogues and adventurers, probably mostly disbanded soldiers, drawn to Bückeburg by the Count's repute. "Not a person here that I should care to speak to twice," he writes; "heads like stones from which not even steel could strike a spark;" and again, "not a woman who knows much more than her alphabet." The Count maintained a kind of staff of thirty warriors, who had seen hard service and something of the world in the Seven Years' War and elsewhere, but were limited in ideas to the art of killing. In fact Bückeburg was a North-German town, and the atmosphere was unavoidably what the Germans call *kleinstädtisch*, and what a few years ago we might have called "provincial," without fear of talking cant.

Worse still, the common people were in a very dreary and oppressed condition, ground down with taxation, and groaning under the most rigorous of military despotisms, with its Wilhelmstein fortress and the sixteenth part of the population, including women and children, turned into soldiers. The whole land was overwhelmed in debt, which the Count let lie as hopeless. Abbt, with his military tendencies and theories of "Death for Fatherland," had not lightened the burden; and now the people looked forward with apprehension to Herder, as one who would torment them with scorpions instead of the whips of Abbt. A week before Herder came, this apprehension had been increased by the arrival of an adventurer, von Zanthier by name, a reckless soldier who was seeking from the Count what he might devour. Doubtless then this was that Herder, the Count's new favourite; they had heard he was an eccentric person; that scar on his face was no doubt from the operation in Strassburg. The prejudice took firm root in the minds of the good people, and like so many prejudices it was not shaken by the discovery of mistake, for that would have been a confession

of weakness. It must be owned there was much in the real Herder's appearance to astonish them. It seems that the head preacher in a Lutheran church of a North-German town did not generally wear a sky-blue coat embroidered with gold, a white waistcoat, and a white hat. "Whenever I go out into the street," writes Herder, "people come and stare at me as if I were an elephant," and we cannot wonder, though he was far enough from being a thick-skinned elephant, human or quadruped.¹

On the first Sunday he had to preach, and curiosity reached its height. Like Karoline we can see him in our mind's eye, as he enters the church, built in 1615 with the hand of faith rather than the hand of beauty—"exemplum religionis non structura," as it modestly says of itself; we can see him as he walks up the aisle by the side of his worthy though formal colleague, in "his little mantle with the ends stuck in his pocket," whilst all the villagers, now so long forgotten, were craning out their necks to catch a glimpse. The slim little figure with colourless face and powdered hair (almost like a corpse, Westfeld says), mounted the pulpit, and in a very quiet voice began to preach. He had chosen his favourite old subject, the soul-destroying power of dead forms, and as he went on to discourse of the lethargy of custom, the desert level of barren devoutness, and the frigid follies of dogma, we can imagine how the coal-black eyes blazed from out that pallid face. But it was in vain. For the first time in his life he had failed. "The congregation went out as cold as they had come in." Some thought he had said what he ought to have said; more thought he had said what he ought not to have said; all agreed that he was a strange, even a remarkable, young man, but otherwise they remained simply indifferent. He seemed hopelessly out of their sphere, and it was the same in his visits to their homes. For the first time he found himself unable to influence any one around him for good. He was even an object of ridicule, a laughing-stock, a mere

¹ Except indeed to the eye of genius: see Richter's saying, chap. xvii.

eccentricity. The other parsons as usual hated him in all Christian charity; "he preaches," said they, "not Christ but Belial." Very few of the inhabitants chose him as their confessor; he said that he had only twenty people in his parish, which seems to mean that only twenty entrusted themselves to his guidance—became his *Beicht-kinder*, or children for confession. "I am a parson without parish," he writes, "a patron of schools without schools, a consistory-councillor without consistory."

For indeed the gymnasium and other schools were gone to wrack, nor were new buildings to be thought of, lest funds be subtracted from the darling fortress. The consistory, a board for the furtherance of ecclesiastical discipline and fit management, had sunk to a merely mechanical affair, pulled through its stately antics by two hide-bound jurists. It was long before Herder by stubborn persistence and calm sympathy, especially through his lectures for confirmation, contrived to get some hold on these vacuous minds, and he then found, as people always find, that they were not so hopeless after all. But in the meantime what was to become of his ideal of life? Where were those bright dreams of reality and practical activity, those visions of himself as a reformer of nations, as a councillor of kings? How should one be a Luther in this ditch of Bückeburg, how turn these stony heads into Emils of Rousseau, and that without so much as a school-house? It was a weary time. The pain of the man of old was Herder's now; "no strength, but many thoughts at heart." Unlike the little book in the Revelation, this book was bitter in the mouth. The fire was hot; but the sword of Siegfried was not forged at the parlour-grate; it was at Patmos that St. John saw the heavens open, and only when Prometheus was chained to his rock could he become worthy of a poet.

In his loneliness the face of Nature was revealed to him as he had never seen it before. We remember him among the forests and lakes of marshy Mohrungen, in the country-houses by Riga, on the great sea, and in the woods of Nantes; but now there was a new tone in his voice, new not only to him but to

the whole of Europe at that time, and a truer than we are now wont to hear, because newer. The house that was made ready for him was a large building with twelve rooms standing on the outskirts of the town, where now the street runs that bears his name. With his disordered finances he had some difficulty in furnishing the place; after many months he writes that his very coffee-cups were borrowed; but he took great pleasure in the little garden that lay in front and was bounded by the town rampart. Here he planted a few shrubs and fruit-trees, sometimes finding "his only consolation in roses and strawberries." Just across the rampart the Wald or forest began, and stretched far away to the Bückeburg hills and the ranges that guide the Weser northward to the sea. On this rampart he would lie sometimes from dawn to sunset and far into the night, listening to the nightingales, and filling the moonlight with visions of his Karoline. With the freedom of possession he would go out to look at his garden at all hours of night. "The townspeople," he writes, "regard me as a great philosopher because I go walking about in the forests at four o'clock in the morning, as a great courtier because I can do pretty much what I like, and as the most celebrated of men because I have now gained the prize" (the prize from the Berlin Academy for the treatise on language). With Klopstock, Ossian, or Percy's *Reliques* in his pocket he would wander far out into the forests: "I live the life of a hermit, philosopher, or shepherd;" the whole land is like the forest of Arden, but where—he asks—is Rosalind? He learnt the joys of riding, and, as he galloped wildly through the glades or down the country-roads to Lemgo some thirty miles to the south west, the cares of life took flight; with his good horse under him and the peaceful woods around, loneliness was gone and ambition had no meaning. Or, to make an end, for fear of what Emerson calls euphuism, let us take this little picture from a letter to Karoline:—

Yesterday I was not quite well, owing to the use of a cold bath. In the afternoon I was tempted by a beautiful autumn day [he writes in September]; I throw on an overcoat and boots, and wander out. Picture



to yourself on one side a chain of little hills covered with wood (called the Harl), over nearly all of which I have roamed; they are now all a-shimmer in the silky mist of autumn and the evening sun. In front, meadows and gardens; on the other side the feudal castle of the Counts, reflected in the clear and peaceful water; before me, the evening sun. I had the English ballads with me, but could not read; and, not far from some groups of black and romantic trees, I flung myself upon a wild height hard by a waterfall, that fell with two-fold stream—now fast, now slow, now dark, now clear. Around it much wild forest-growth, and at my side all the wild flowers that come in Shakespeare's songs of love and faery. Mountain, sun, and evening all encircling me round!

Truly Werther is not far distant.

Karoline meantime had a fairly happy summer of it in spite of her brother-in-law's trying temper. After Herder's departure she seems to have been rather seriously ill, which naturally added to his depression, but she recovered in time to receive Gleim and Wieland on their visit to Darmstadt. Here is her tender little account, from a letter dated 4th June, 1771.

"I am still in a sweet dream of friendship. Gleim and Wieland have been here; they stayed with us all one afternoon till midnight. Would that I could describe to you some scenes that moved my whole soul! Merck, Leuchsenring, and I, curled ourselves up in a corner of the window round the good, gentle, cheerful, noble, old Father Gleim, and abandoned ourselves to the uncontrolled sentiment of tenderest friendship. Would that you had seen the gentle and cheerful face of the good old man! He wept a tear of joy, and I—I lay with my head in Merck's bosom; he was exceedingly moved, and wept too" (yes; tears from those tiger eyes), "and—I don't know all that we did. O sweet tears of my life, wept in the arms of friends! O sweet tears of friendship, how godlike are ye!" and so on. And again, "Gleim called me a good girl, Psyche, and loves me, and will make me a song. . . . Wieland stayed with Merck, but unhappily he was ill in bed all day with the colic, and yet kept his temper. He is made for friendship, and what he says is honest, but at first sight he is not attractive; he is cold when he comes into society, talks a good deal, especially when he has humour. You must see him some time before you get to know him; only an hour before he went away did I perceive that he can show warmth and sentiment; and I love him since I have learnt to know him as a friend. Yet I could wish some of his author's pride and vanity away."

That is Wieland to the life, and gentle old Father Gleim, too, the long-suffering turkey-hen, as "Goethe, or the devil," told him to his face, that would sit brooding over other fowls' eggs, and, if she found she had been wasting time over a pot-egg, still took all kindly. The rest of the summer Karoline spent in pleasant walks and excursions round Darmstadt, a visit to the Frankfort fair (where she saw an opera from the French, and thought very poorly of the artificial business), and in doughty struggles with the French tongue, for she was smitten with enthusiasm for Rousseau. On the anniversary of their betrothal Herder sent her his picture on ivory. "Not a bit like," she declares, and probably about this time she sent him the portrait of herself which has been described. She was full of schemes for his future; she would sacrifice herself a thousand times rather than stand in his way; but her plans came to nothing, and the winter was gloomy for her, the violence of the brother-in-law—"a man," as she says, "who never knew what love was"—becoming now almost unbearable, and other family troubles succeeding the first; for her own brother was sunk in hopeless gloom because the one lady of his heart had married without telling him a word about it, and her eldest sister was now on the point of a final rupture with her husband. There were ugly whisperings, also, in the Merck family on both sides, and altogether marriage must have seemed to her a very dubious adventure. For a long time she had thoughts of quitting her brother-in-law's home and retiring from the world with her divorced eldest sister and the disappointed brother. Haym lays great stress on the cool and "platonic" tone which he finds in the letters on both sides during this year; but, for myself, I cannot see sufficient grounds to make this significant. Hints at an ethereal love as between two fleshless and distant spirits I believe to be entirely due to the phantasy of the age, as are such terms of endearment as "noble youth," "sweetest brother," "most virtuous young man." I think it certain that never for one moment did they really doubt or draw back; and yet she, at all events, might have pleaded some cause, owing to

her irresolute lover's continual hesitations and delays. The more we read Karoline's letters the more we are convinced of her uncomplaining bravery and her endless powers of endurance, self sacrifice, and delicate sympathy, till at last we are obliged to confess that, in spite of her inevitable sentiment, there have been few such women in that or any age.

Returning to Herder, we find him doing little in the way of production this year (1771) except continuing his translations of old songs and ballads, chiefly from the English, and arranging those treatises on Ossian and Shakespeare which we already know. He also proposed to himself a new translation of Job, and throughout the winter his thoughts still ran on schemes to further his work on *Plastik*. In July, under the influence of Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar*, he had begun a kind of lyrical drama for music, to be called *Brutus*, a Cantata. It was not finally done with till 1774, when it was set to music by Christian or Christoph Bach, and was received with much applause, especially by the Count, to whom it was dedicated. Whilst we are in the way with it, we may mention that in 1773 Herder received a letter from his old enemy Riedel, once of Erfurt, whom some readers may remember. He was now at Vienna, and had already sunk into trouble through his Protestantism and tobacco-smoking, but was sheltered by Gluck the musician, whose household he managed whilst Gluck was away in Paris this October, producing the *Iphigenie*. In order to conciliate Herder, Riedel now wrote to tell him that Gluck had put to music much of Klopstock's poetry, particularly the *Hermannschlacht*, with much feeling. Perhaps encouraged by this, Herder in the next year sent his *Brutus* to Gluck for perusal, accompanied by a remarkable letter which, unfortunately, is out of my reach.¹ Since this first year in Bückeburg he had the idea of the possibility of a new poetry and a new music, and an "ideal union of the two arts," a kind of poetry "which would stand truly in the middle, between painting and

¹ Sentences quoted by Haym, vol. i. part ii. p. 476.

music," and "a kind of music which would not dominate the poetry." The *Brutus*, therefore, was not to stand on its own feet, but was only to attain unity in conjunction with music. In the letter to Gluck Herder, probably out of compliment to the composer, modifies his theory a little by emphasizing the part of music. "A poem must be what the inscription is to a picture or a statue—an explanation, a guide to lead the stream of music by means of words interspersed in its current. It must be heard, not read; the words must only breathe life into the emotional frame of music, and this must speak and act, work on the emotions, and utter the thought, only following the spirit and general idea of the poet." It almost seems as though Herder had already some vague presentiment of the theories of Schopenhauer and Wagner, as though he dimly foresaw the time when, to use the metaphor of Professor Shairp—a metaphor that may appear bold, even for a professor of poetry—"the two sisters, poetry and music, should be wedded all along the line."¹

At all events we may say that music was to Herder very much more than it was to Lessing or Schiller, more even than to Goethe himself. We have seen from his boyhood that he always inclined to the grave Church music, especially of the old classical and Italian schools, and now in Bückeburg his favourite is Pergolesi with his *Stabat Mater*. It sometimes seems as though Herder wanted very little to make him a musician; it is idle to speculate whether fit training would not have done it; but, remembering that old harpsichord wheeled from room to room in the Mohrunen school, we must allow that his training was pitifully insufficient. To say nothing of creation, he never even acquired any great skill in playing the piano, though he would perform simple things for his own pleasure and to amuse intimate friends, and it is pretty to think of him seated in the twilight at Darmstadt with Karoline at his side playing over old chorales and passages from the early oratorios. Yet here,

¹ Oxford Lecture on Shelley.

too, was infinite passion and the pain of a finite heart; here, too, he could find no utterance, but was tied and bound, having “no strength, but many thoughts at heart.”

In the summer of this first year at Bückeburg a post was again offered him in Riga, if he cared to return, for his old enemy Schlegel had departed. But at the same time he heard that the husband of Madame Busch was dead, and he prudently resolved not to go; he seems even to have intended to give up all correspondence with Riga, for he answered no letters or only in the coldest way, especially when he was informed that the lady felt herself ill-used. But in the winter, on the news that Hartknoch had lost his bright young wife, all such intentions broke down, and the intercourse with the faithful bookseller was renewed with more friendliness than ever. In his letter of condolence Herder inclosed a small sum of money for his poor old mother in Mohrungen, who was in rather distressed conditions, and died in the following autumn with many longings for her son.

Towards the end of 1771 Herder began once more to write reviews for Nicolai's journal in Berlin; and it is a strange thing that he continued these contributions for a man, with whom he had so little in common, for nearly two years. He also sent reviews and pieces of verse to Claudius for his little paper in Wandsbeck. But the paper was not a success, and Herder had to use every means to find work for his friend, in Bückeburg if possible, or in Darmstadt, especially when Claudius in the following March, with less prudence or more resolution than Herder, married his Rebecca, “his simple, artless, peasant-girl,” out of hand, and seemed quite pleased with himself and all the world. Herder for his part continued his sad and lonely life unbroken by a glimpse of pleasure till the new year 1772. It seems to have been proposed that he should renew his travels with the Prince of Eutin, the mother being particularly anxious for this, and the former hofmeister having been dismissed. But he firmly refused; he probably knew that no good was to be looked for from such a connection for either of the two, and

indeed soon afterwards the boy was declared hopelessly insane and unfit for government, so far had he gone into the gloomy regions of religious questionings and introspection. In December Herder imagined that a coldness had arisen between him and Karoline; the fancy was unfounded, but we have seen that at this time she was exposed to much annoyance and distress in her home, and her melancholy was to a certain extent reflected in her letters; she also began to write very highly of Leuchsenring, who had been sending her letters, calling her his Psyche, and otherwise behaving as such men will. Herder in his Bückeburg solitude was quickly jealous, but the storm blew over, and with January things brightened, till on the 24th we find him writing, "For the last fortnight I have begun to live in Bückeburg, and all seems to be altered through the alteration of one soul." This one soul was no other than the Count's wife.

The Countess Maria was of the same age as Herder, and was born in Westphalia, where she and her much beloved twin-brother Jonathan, being left orphans at their birth, were brought up through childhood at the hand of relations. When she was sixteen, she went to live with an elder widowed sister, who on her second marriage took her to Silesia, where she fell into the power of the Pietists, and spent many years of her life in self-torments about her own salvation, having no one in that district to say to her, in the words of Carlyle's Scotch physician, "My dear madam, it is not of the slightest consequence." At twenty-two the Count of Lippe married her in the abrupt fashion we have seen. As might be supposed, the union was not altogether happy at first, and the estrangement grew wider when Abbt arrived and took the Count captive with philosophic discussions, in which the retiring and religious woman felt herself out of place. But on Abbt's death the Count was drawn to her by her genuine sympathy, and continued to regard her with the same kind of tenderness that Friedrich Wilhelm showed to his "pretty Feekin"; in fact people used to say that "they loved each other

too much to be quite comfortable." She is described as very beautiful, "with a face like a Raphael Madonna." "A picture of charity, gentleness, love, and humility," Herder calls her; "since her confinement a slight pallor lies on her face like a heavenly veil." In Bückeburg she was more popular, we may imagine, than her husband; the people called her "the mother of the land," for her kind benevolence to the widow and orphan. She made yearly visits to the wives of the military and courtiers, but till Herder's arrival she remained alone in spirit. In her we see another of those beautiful souls not uncommon at the time, like Goethe's Fraülein von Klettenberg and the *schöne Seele* in *Meister*. Herder was her formal confessor, and now with the customary new year's gifts she sent him a letter with various spiritual questions, assurances of friendship and admiration, and an invitation to nearer intercourse.

In Herder's answer he honestly explained the trials of his position, and at the concert next evening he was more than ever charmed with her modesty and kindness; the Count's manner, too, seemed warmer, though he treated him to a long sermon on moral philosophy. Herder had now gained a new interest in life; to have one sympathetic listener is enough—is more than any reasonable man has a right to expect. The Countess became his parish, his congregation; for her he made his sermons and studied religious questions. He lent her the works of Spalding and Jerusalem, Klopstock and Lavater. When in April to her great sorrow her twin-brother died, Herder preached one of his great sermons on the certainty of immortality, sent her a copy in his own writing (as he did with many other sermons), and wrote for her two cantatas, the *Raising of Lazarus* and the *Childhood of Christ*, which were set to music by Christian Bach. The intercourse continued without a break till the Countess died some years hence; in the meantime she wrote him a hundred and five letters, large extracts from which are given in the *Reminiscences*; they are chiefly concerning her soul and kindred subjects; all Herder's answers

but one were destroyed by herself. She ascribes his advent in Bückeburg to a decree of the Providence that watched over her, and no doubt Herder could do much for the poor anxious lady; but at the same time the influence was not all on one side. She was far more distinctly religious in the ordinary sense of the word than Herder had ever been or perhaps was ever to be, and the contact with such a spirit did not fail to bring forth fruits in him after their kind.

In February Herder made a journey on horseback to Göttingen, partly for the sake of the change and congenial society, partly to collect materials from the great library for furtherance of his knowledge of the early history of the human race. For the first time he found himself engaged on a work that required really hard study and careful investigation, and could not be written off under the inspiration of the moment. But the week he now spent in Göttingen was after all valuable, not so much for the treasures of the library as for the beginning of his friendship with two very remarkable persons—Heyne and his wife Therese.

To us in these cooler days it is strange to watch how quickly this friendship flowered. In spite of much that was nauseous the pervading spirit of that time had its advantages. Men were not so solitary in a crowd, they knew each other sooner, and did not for ever speak as it were in the passage of the house with the door open; they did not choke down their real feelings till they had no more to choke, and when they met there was a chance that their society would become something more than a spectacle or a narration of the latest news. Heyne, whom Herder calls “a most noble, polite, and melodious soul, such as one could hardly expect in a Latin man, nor perhaps find in the course of centuries,” will often cross our path again, for this friendship continued with hardly an interruption till Herder’s death, after which Heyne, together with Georg Müller (brother of Johann, the historian of Switzerland), acted as one of the editors of Herder’s collected works. We will, therefore, pay more attention now to Therese, the wife of this studious and vastly-learned

little man, who chiefly by his power of sympathy and dramatic feeling was throwing a new light on ancient literature.¹

Therese was a woman of high passions and great powers of soul, inclined to melancholy, and always terribly in earnest; there is something heroic in her, though it is apt to approach the stage-heroic too nearly. "Not beautiful," writes Herder in his description to Karoline, "but her whole face expresses feeling; sometimes as silent as though in a far-off dream She is always with her children—very extraordinary children," as indeed they were likely to be with such parents. Her love for these children, too, is almost terrible; "my every nerve, every drop of blood thrills hot when I see my children," she writes in a letter to Herder; yet four of these she saw die, till at length she could bear up no longer, but slowly faded away, and three years and a half after Herder's first visit she left her husband "as desolate as a hunted deer," for his happiness in life was bounded by the walls of his home. Her letters to Herder are the wild outpourings of a passionate friendship, that would seem exaggerated did we not know how true a woman she was.

On the last evening together Heyne had given his new friend an account of his own early struggles, how at one time he had owed his means of study, his very existence, to a housemaid, and the rest of the story that is now tolerably familiar to most of us, and has encouraged many, from Carlyle downwards, as it then encouraged Herder. On the other evenings the friends would talk or Herder would read aloud, chiefly from Klopstock, Therese of course meantime shedding copious tears.

"O that I could hear you again," she writes; "how long is it since I have had half hours like that! For my Heyne is too busy with his work, dear man, to read with me now." [Alas! how strait the limits of a woman's joy;² even this woman's, in spite of children and husband dearly loved.]

Or again: "Yes, this soul feels! O, my friend, it is all feeling for

¹ See Carlyle's Essay on Heyne, *Miscellanies*, vol. ii. and his speech at Edinburgh.

² See Goethe's *Iphigenie*, first lines.

the tenderest thoughts that ever mortal felt. Judge whether you are not dear to my soul. You wake my spirit up again, my spirit long cloaked in a veil of sadness and pain. May I speak thus? Do I weary you?"

"My letter came straight from my heart" [this in answer to suspected coldness in one of Herder's answers]; "and I am always proud of this sensitive and suffering heart. How shall I in any way more solemnly offer to you my open heart? Only never doubt about its worth, wit, and understanding! Ah, I know not what *you* are; I am feeling throughout, and who would find in me anything else—I am not for him." "I had met several other men of distinction; my heart went out to them full of feeling, full of enthusiasm, but—" [in short, they did not understand the poor woman]—"but then my Herder appeared to me, and it was as though part of heaven opened, and a spirit of a higher kind, enwoven in a fair and pliant body, penetrated my whole being."

Let us take one more passage, with some truth in it, and then make an end:

"O, my Herder! spirit blest by heaven with understanding and beautiful qualities, do dear friends, children, loved ones, make us happy? Does not each band which twines itself round our heart and soul make us unhappy when it is torn away? and is not the fear of this already a poison which gnaws at our peace?"

These few extracts are fair examples of the pages which Herder received from time to time during the next year; to us they are chiefly useful as symptoms of the prevailing malady, and also as further proofs of the strange power which Herder exercised over women of a thoughtful and imaginative mind. To complete the picture, a passage in one of Herder's letters to Karoline will serve:—

"In the sweetest hour, and the sweetest moment of the hour, my friend Therese Heyne asked me whether, with such a heart as mine, as she called it, I had not some loved-one, some maiden. I said, 'Yes!' and raised my hands to heaven. '*Der ich aber kein Glied werth bin, und werth zu sein scheine!*'¹ My eyes overflowed, but the excellent woman took it otherwise, and began to comfort me."

We have seen that Herder's *Essay on the Origin of Language* had gained the prize in the Berlin Academy. All his friends hastened to congratulate him; Karoline rejoiced that her lover should be so famous, his name on every one's lips; and the Count

¹ The translation is left to the reader's judgment.

was delighted, because the great Frederick would hear how distinguished a man little Bückeburg had in her service; to Herder alone his success brought no joy. He already dimly felt that a great crisis in his thought was at hand, and that it would be best to be absolutely free of the past; he wished he had not written a single word till he should be thirty; and, now that this little work was published in his own name and was sure of a wide circulation, he felt that it would only bind him to old lines of thought from which he had hoped to escape, and involve him in endless controversy into which he must enter without the zeal and assurance of conviction. Thus does a man leave his own productions, of whatever sort, behind him directly they are finished, and is startled to find that inevitably he remains their slave.

At Easter, 1772, the blow that Herder expected came; came in the unkindest form of all—as a cold and hostile review by his old master, Hamann, in the *Königsberg Journal*. Herder had had no correspondence with the Mage of the North since he left Riga, and when the prize essay was published Hamann could no longer regard “his Alcibiades” as a disciple, but as a traitor to the cause, a deserter to Sparta, one who had forsaken the armies of the faithful for the ranks of the Enlightened Philistines of Berlin. It was true that the main ideas of the essay were derived from Hamann himself, but in his zeal for the dry light of science Herder had omitted—nay, distinctly denied—the direct agency of the Deity. Hamann, whose trustful mysticism strove to pierce the gloom where the light of science cannot reach, could by no means forgive this heresy in his favourite pupil. God might act through nature and the voices of beasts, but from God language, as all else, must come, for in God we live and move and have our being. In a letter to Nicolai, Herder shows that this position is really the same as the main theory of the essay, only in different words; but, in spite of understanding and clear-as-daylight science, the personal influence of his old “Socrates, Pan, and Satyr,” was too strong to be resisted. His mind was gradually more and more estranged from Berlin and drawn back to Königsberg. The intercourse with the

Countess, the fire of loneliness, and the mysterious voices of Nature, were beginning to do their work. Might there not be more things in heaven and earth ——? He hastened to withdraw the heresies of the essay and throw himself at his master's feet, Hartknoch acting as mediator. Hamann ran half-way to meet him, for this his son had been dead and was alive again. Without withdrawing from his position he wrote a second more kindly review of the essay, followed by a little treatise, *The Last Words of the Red-Cross Knight on the Divine or Human Origin of Language*, in which all real hostility vanishes. In a long letter Herder strove to explain how slight was the difference between them, especially as in writing for "an enlightened Royal Prussian Academy" he had been compelled to adopt "the Leibnitzian-æsthetic form," if only as a mask. The reconciliation was complete; and soon afterwards, in a French epistle *Au Solomon de Prusse*, in which Hamann entreated Frederick to extend his glorious patronage to German literature, this significant sentence is to be found, "*Herder sera Platon et le Président de votre Académie des Sciences.*"¹ Perhaps fortunately for all concerned, the letter never reached the King.

In April of this year, at the very time of his return to Hamann, Herder began to contribute to the Frankfurt *Athenæum* (*Frankfurter Gelehrte Anzeigen*), and continued to send reviews and essays till the following October. This paper was edited by Schlosser, the friend and afterwards brother-in-law of Goethe, but the real power was in the hands of Merck, who, through Herder's recommendation, had become acquainted with Goethe the winter before. With such contributors as Goethe, Merck, and Herder, the journal soon became the recognised organ of the new movement, and it is noticeable that it took its whole tone from Herder, Goethe's work especially being hardly distinguishable from his. In November, after Herder had ceased to contribute, Claudius writes to him: "You have a hand in the Frankfurt paper, haven't you? At all events it seems as

¹ Hamann's *Schriften*, vol. vii. pp. 191-199, quoted by Haym.

though you were the conductor, and the whole choir sang to your beat. The comparison is not mine, but has my approval." And a writer in Jena maintained that Herder had called himself one of the greatest heads in Germany. But, in spite of his powerful influence, the connection had to be broken off in October, for reasons which will be hinted at when we have first glanced at the position of affairs in Darmstadt this summer.

Early in the year Karoline's prospects began to brighten, for she was reconciled to Merck after some difference (she seems to have suspected him, in fact, of reading her letters); and in February she writes that she had with tears concluded a covenant of fairest friendship with the most feeling and noble of girls, who had been staying a fortnight in Darmstadt. This was no other than Luise von Ziegler, now immortal as the Lila (not Lili) of Goethe's poems.

"On my birthday," Karoline goes on, "she sent me a little blue heart on a white ribbon of innocence, as a bond of friendship. I should so like to have made a song on it—the little blue heart of innocence—if I only could." At the parting, "she was choked with emotion, whilst I, meantime, could weep, and her eyes seemed to yearn towards heaven, like the eyes of a dying woman. O, the beautiful soul! Merck says that as he led her downstairs she trembled extremely. She is a sweet, enthusiastic girl; has made her grave in her garden, and a throne in her garden; and there she has bowers and roses, and her lambkin that eats and drinks with her." [The lambkin died under the treatment, and was succeeded by "a faithful dog."]

In March Goethe and Georg Schlosser came to stay with Merck. Goethe seemed to Karoline a good-hearted, cheerful man, without any display of learning:

"He occupied himself a great deal with Merck's children, and has a certain resemblance to you in tone or speech, or something, that quite won my heart. In the beautiful sunset Goethe, my sister, and I sat together for a moment and spoke of you. Next day we went for a walk, and in the evening had no sentiment, but were very cheerful, Goethe and I dancing minuets to the piano, and he recited your ballad, 'Edward, Edward.'" [Herder's famous translation from the Scotch.]

Spring came. Karoline was again at variance with Merck,

but consoled herself with *Don Quixote* and *Tom Jones*. In April Goethe walked over from Frankfurt, and, as they sat together under a tree in the pouring rain, he sang them Herder's rendering of *Under the Greenwood Tree*, and in the evening read aloud some scenes from his *Götz von Berlichingen*. Next day there was a water-party, "but it was very rough. Goethe is cram-full of songs. . . . Merck told him of our Lila, and he told me" such a sad story of his heart,—in fact his desertion by Aennchen of Leipzig, not a word of Frederika. Next came Madame de la Roche, Goethe's friend in Coblenz,¹ astonishing them all by her fine manners and coquetry. By the end of April Goethe was with them again, and Lila at the same time. "We went yesterday with Goethe to my rock and hill. He has appropriated a beautiful great rock to himself, and has gone to-day to cut his name on it; no one can climb it but he alone." Karoline thought she already noticed Goethe's inclination to Lila and did her best to further the matter, only regretting that he was not of noble birth. She was very much attracted to him herself, "parted from him with a kiss and tears of heart," when he went his way to Wetzlar. Herder could hardly help some jealousy, and indeed he had cause for fear, for what woman could resist this man? And when Goethe sent her, besides some other poems, one in which he imagines himself looking from his rock with pity on the forlorn maiden, Herder, being very indignant that his *Psyche* was made to cut so sad a figure, hastened to write another version of the story. Whereupon Goethe, hearing that there was some offence, wrote to tell him that as far as he was concerned he might give his maiden as many melancholy hours as he chose without reproach. This does not sound soothing, but nevertheless Herder continues to write of Goethe in terms of the highest praise; he admires his verses; and of *Götz* he writes, "It contains rare German strength, depth, and truth, though now and again the intention is better than the execution." (And yet in *Aus meinem Leben*

¹ *Aus meinem Leben*, book xiii. beginning.

he is said to have received Götz very badly.) Herder, however, a few months afterwards, took his revenge in the *Picture Fable for Goethe*, a satirical ballad in which Goethe is represented as the bright and merry sparrow from Frankfurt-on-the-Main.

And in Westphalia's forests wild,
Where Hermann once did fight,
There sat a poor young falcon-hawk
Too early lamed in flight.
Broken his wing.—Alas ! too soon !
The wild woods cried in sooth.

Chor. O falcon sad ! O falcon sad !
Too early lamed in youth.

But what if the falcon should recover and swoop through the free air with the strength of a young eagle ? One feels it might be the worse for the merry sparrow.

The reference to Hermann is due to Herder's first visit to Pymont, which lies not far to the south-east from Bückeburg. When Goethe's letter came this July, he was spending some days there, not so much for the sake of the wells, the gaming-tables, and "the promenade dolls" (*Alleenpuppen*), as for the beautiful nature of the district—the "fairest, bravest, most German and romantic scenery in the world ; not vine-clad hills and groves of cedar, but bold forest, oaks and beeches, and upheavals of the globe ;" and in the evening the calm moonlight glancing through the defiles where Varus lost his legions.

These first promises of the dawning love for nature as she is, alone offer solace to the historian as he toils, sick and panting, through the soft and tearful utterances which flood the average letters of this period. In pity he should give the reader as little as is sufficient, but it is impossible to obtain a true idea of the greatness of such men as Herder and Goethe unless we have realised how universal was this peculiar infection. It was not confined to Germany, for in England the plague was at least as strong, and from England the germs of the disease chiefly came. "I have seen an English engraving," Karoline writes this summer, "*Angelica and Medoro* ; they are sitting together under a tree, on which they have cut their names ; she is leaning

against his shoulder, and both are weeping. O you can feel how it went to my soul." We may see the like in any old print-shop still, but they go to the soul no more.

In the end of August, two years after the lovers had met, we come upon a finer scene. Karoline had often entreated Herder to take her to himself; whatever his hardships she "could go and do likewise"; but he had advised her to remain where she was till his position was more settled either in Göttingen or elsewhere. At length the tyranny of her privy-councillor brother-in-law became unbearable. Not a meal passed without some violent outbreak of temper; it was spoiling her digestion. One day she rose from table, and was going to her own room, when the privy-councillor in his rage ordered her to stop. She replied she would not sacrifice her health to his pleasure any longer.

"Thereupon a fierce dispute; till at length I said, 'There's an end of it! My eldest sister-(the divorced one) reaches such and such a village in a week, and I'll go to her; and for your further information I may tell you that I am betrothed to Herder.'"

The privy-councillor was struck dumb with astonishment at the sight of this quiet and rather tearful girl thus rising in defiance like a very Electra, as she always was at heart. He could not sleep that night, and next morning he hastened to make terms of truce, which he obtained after much difficulty. As secrecy was at an end, she hoped Herder would come for her in the winter; "by Christmas she would have her clothes ready, and could promise to be a good wife and mother."

But Herder in his present state of affairs, above all in his present state of mind, could not hope to come before the spring. This October his mother died. Karoline, too, was occupied with her eldest sister, who had come to Darmstadt apparently half insane, "her head full of magic and witchcraft and fears of poisoning." Then she went for a visit to Mannheim, where she was again disgusted with the opera, but took much delight in the great collection of casts from the antique, the same that first

revealed the Greeks to Goethe. She was beginning to make arrangements for her household, and in November Goethe himself came to Darmstadt again from Wetzlar.

“Our good Goethe is here,” she writes, “lives and draws, and in the winter evenings we sit round him, and see and listen. At Merck’s house there is an academy; they draw and engrave on copper. He (Goethe) has drawn me a little landscape with a castle on a hill and a village below. . . . He is teaching Merck to draw. He seems to me rather quieter and more refined. He says you are not kind to him, and yet he is very fond of you. He is still thinking of becoming a painter, and we urge him strongly to do so. ‘As I am deficient in all virtues,’ he said, ‘I will devote myself to my talents.’ Out of such a head something might come. To us girls and women he is better than he was and is heartily kind, but as for loving—he has too much of the ashes of his first love in his heart, and that is natural enough. We are all very fond of him here.”

As to “the ashes of first love,” and consequent reserve, we, with reminiscences of Lotte in Wetzlar and with *Werther* before us, could say more. But we are only concerned now with the causes of this estrangement from Herder which Goethe regretted. Readers of *Aus meinem Leben* will remember that at this period Merck and Goethe, who was then under Merck’s guidance, used to call Herder Dechant or Swift, from the bitter sarcasms and humours of his correspondence with them. Goethe is inclined to attribute these to his inborn irritability; and of course this is partly true, for sarcasm is the defence of the sensitive. But there was another and stronger motive at work on Herder’s mind, of which Goethe even in old age could not know so much as we know now with our plentiful materials.

Early in this Bückeburg period the keen eyes of Merck had noticed signs of the approaching change. One day he looked significantly at Karoline and said, “Herder is quite altered; once he was like a bird on the bough.” Karoline feared the change was due to her, but she was not entirely the cause. In his answer Herder writes, “I must leave all the lightness and fire of youth behind, and get another nature,—stable, firm and upright.” Such expressions become frequent and increase in strength with time;

“I live now with more feeling of hope, aim, and firm trust in creation; with more self-determination and virtue.” “I am much altered, but I see it is for the best; in my former wild state I was not worthy of you.” “The time of vanity and inanity is gone; I long for nothing so much as to live in Nature, Reality, and Truth—to strengthen a heart and spirit (*Muth*) that is weakened by the head. Immortality of fame is a barren prickly shell, and virtue and humanity alone are the kernel; day and night my thoughts are directed towards casting off all rags and patches, and becoming a simple man with an aim in the world.” “To become the best country parson in Germany would be sufficient object in life, and then I could wish all learning and worldly success in the Archipelago with the Russian fleet.” And to Hartknoch he writes, “I am dreaming of a second part to my life, that shall be great and good and silent.” And to Merck, “I am trying to burn out every trace of vanity and self-seeking.”

In all this we see the first beginnings of morality in Herder. It is not to be supposed that he had ever done anything distinctly immoral, if we except his acts of shyness; but his morality hitherto had been negative—that is to say, he had had no morality. He had been as free both from sin and virtue as those who have not the law. In spite of all his Teutonism his life had been Greek—of the intellect mainly. Not having felt what self-renunciation meant, he had no conception of modern virtue; and, having no virtue, but still being incapable of sinking to the common level, he had remained ambitious. But now, alone with Nature, he seemed to himself to see the vanity of things intellectual and the meanness of self-seeking. With Nature calmly working around him “without haste, without rest,” from the stars to the moss on the wall, the fame of a man seemed of little account; and, after all, what difference did it make whether there were a few good books, a few fine poems, more or less? But, renouncing himself, to have done the small thing that was nearest with all the thoroughness that in him lay, to have stubbed but one yard of his Thurnaby Waste, that were something; nay, the loftiest genius could do no more. I have attributed this growth of morality chiefly to the influence of Nature, in spite of the words of one of our own poets, who tells us there is no effort on her brow; for in Her-

der's younger days, at all events, the life of nature did not seem a life of self-seeking and ambition.

But hand-in-hand with this influence was another, which led him on the same road. Ever since his reconciliation to Hamann he had more and more inclined to the mystic Pietism proclaimed by his old master. We have seen something of his intimacy with the pious Countess and with Frau Heyne, and in October he writes to Merck, heartily deploring the coldness that seemed to have arisen between them, but at the same time adding :

“ You may have perceived that I am no longer the theological libertine that I was, but you will hardly have conjectured that I have changed into an inspired mystic. But the less the soul finds in the present world, the fonder does she become of building or dreaming for herself worlds at a distance. Heaven and hermits' cells are always close together.” And to Karoline he writes, “ I have now so much warm enthusiasm (*Schwärmerei*) that I believe the most foolish ideas, which I could not have believed before.” And again, “ Where love is, there is faith; and faith is a peculiar thing that does not depend on reason and explanation, but believes what is and does not doubt, for it sees that it is there, though it could not explain it if asked a thousand times.”

The words are the words of Herder, but it is evident the doctrine is the doctrine of Lavater, the man whose watchword was Faith, who “ could not conceive how a man could live and breathe without being a Christian”; who confronted the young Goethe with the hard dilemma: either Christian or Atheist! “ Whereupon,” adds Goethe, “ I explained to him that, if he would not leave me my Christianity as I had hitherto entertained it, I could just as well embrace Atheism, especially as I saw no one rightly knew what either exactly meant.”¹ Lavater had written to Herder in Riga, but the letter remained unanswered till this autumn (1772), when Herder was for the first time studying the *Vistas into Eternity* (*Aufsichten in die Ewigkeit*), a series of letters written by Lavater to Zimmermann, containing a complete account of the future life. These *Vistas*

¹ *Aus meinem Leben*, book xiv. near the beginning.

were intended as the groundwork of a great poem on heaven in the style of the *Messias*; and to obtain a clear knowledge of the subject Lavater had not only used the eye of faith but had collected opinions from the theological specialists of the day, much in the same way as he afterwards collected types for his *Physiognomik*. Coming when it did, the book had a great effect on Herder, partly, no doubt, owing to his mother's death, and also to its really powerful use of analogy, to which he had himself been always strongly inclined. He writes to Karoline, "Lavater is, after Klopstock, perhaps the greatest genius in Germany;" and at the end of October he began the correspondence with Lavater himself which lasted for four or five years. Herder's first letter is of very great length, and is chiefly taken up with objections to the definite and childish realism of the *Vistas*. At the same time the tone is warm and sympathetic. There is none of the bitterness and Swift's humour which distressed Goethe at this time, and Herder is at one with Lavater in condemning "those philosophers of ours who will reduce everything in *Barbara*" (the first syllogistic figure). The enthusiasm of Lavater's answer is almost frantic: "To know Herder had been the dream of his life—without Herder he could not live and die," and so on; in fact, there was concluded a warm and eternal friendship, which lasted, as has been said, about four years. Now, therefore, we can better understand Herder's difficulty in continuing to correspond with Goethe and Merck and to write for their paper. Himself the originator of the *Sturm und Drang* in literature, he had forsaken the intellect for morality, and was now listening to the apostle of a kind of *Sturm und Drang* in religion, whilst his own disciples were following the intellectual road he had marked out. Not till after another year or so had passed did Goethe come to know and value Lavater; to Mephistofeles Merck he was never anything but foolishness and a mockery.

And now the spring was come. Herder had borrowed another considerable sum of money from the ever-faithful Hartknoch; and it was arranged that as soon as his Easter duty was

over he should bring home the bride, Bückeburg and the Countess being all expectation. Leuchsenring was again in Darmstadt, and had completely won the friendship of Karoline by his soft ways, much to the indignation of Goethe, who admired Karoline much himself. "Even the cold woman-hater Goethe calls you an angel," writes Herder. He could not refrain from a few lampoons on the subject, of which *Pater Brey* alone remains to us. In this Merck figures as the honest greengrocer, Karoline is *Lenore*, into whose favour the smooth Father insinuates himself: when on a sudden enter Herder as *Balandrino*, captain of dragoons, who has been away more than two years and now comes to claim his *Lenore*. Knowing that the silly Father can do no real harm, the captain contents himself with persuading him to try his patent methods of universal reform on a wild, uncultivated race, which turns out to be—the pigs; and all ends happily in the marriage of the faithful pair.

"The 2nd of May, 1773," I quote from Karoline's own account, "was our marriage-day in Darmstadt (Herder having arrived on the 26th of April). A worthy old clergyman joined us together in the circle of my relations during a beautiful sunset. The love of my brothers and sisters and the brightest May weather cast a glamour over our feast of joy. We began our married life with a certain amount of debts and trusted cheerfully in God. We hastened away from Darmstadt."¹ Goethe was present at the wedding.

¹ Abridged from *Reminiscences*, vol. i. p. 234.

CHAPTER XI.

BÜCKEBURG STILL, 1773—1776.

“Why, to be Luther—that’s a life to lead.”

* * * * *

“He comes, reclaims God’s earth for God, he says,
Sets up God’s rule again by simple means,
Re-opens a shut book, and all is done!”

BISHOP BLOUGRAM’S APOLOGY.

As Herder’s correspondence with Karoline of necessity ceases here, his personal and inner history again becomes more difficult. Yet his marriage was by no means the end of his life nor of his development. What if we should even prove Gervinus himself, with his hints at decline of powers and the pernicious influence of “the Greek woman,” to be in the wrong? At all events this chapter will show us only too plainly that his sneer against Karoline was for the present quite uncalled for; for it is certain that during the first three and a half years of marriage, with Karoline constantly by his side, Herder showed himself more wanting in Greek self-restraint and clearness of vision than ever before or after, so that through all the period sketched in this chapter his Teuton Hebraism was and continues a rock of offence unto many.

On the way from Darmstadt Herder and his wife seem to have called at the Goethes’ house in Frankfurt, and to have stayed for a time at Göttingen with the Heynes. Then “we hastened,” as Karoline says in the *Reminiscences*, “into our quiet, happy cot in Bückeburg” (a cot with twelve rooms and a fairly large garden, it will be remembered). “The years which we spent together there were the Paradise period of our household happiness, the golden age of our marriage.” At the same

time Herder wrote to his friends in the same cheerful and contented strain; of course he soon found plenty to complain of, but he always could fall back on his wife. "My wife," he writes, "is my comforter and angel that I sink not in the storm;" and again, "I work for my position and office: my wife is all in all to me, and I hope for quite new life and progress."

The Countess was more sympathetic than ever; her brother's widow had just left Bückeburg, and in Karoline she found a new friend; as a mark of special favour the Count invited the pair to dinner in the country-residence of Baum, "where," writes Karoline, "the first meeting with the Countess silently bound our souls together for ever. It was a holy relationship. Words cannot express it." Another lady too, Frau von Beschaffer by name, who in misery's school had learnt to give succour, for a long time back had felt a secret sympathy with Herder, and now came forward as the friend and adviser, "the mother" of the young wife. By degrees the feeling of the whole of Bückeburg towards Herder became changed; he had already won many by his lectures for confirmation; and now the common people, finding him little inclined to torment them with scorpions, and seeing that he was a man of like human affections with themselves, ceased to regard him as an elephant, a philosopher, or any other freak of nature, and opened their hearts to him with enthusiasm; all the more when Westfeld, whose political economy had failed to excite any ardent affection, quitted Bückeburg for service in Hanover early in 1774. Some honest person even said to Herder once, "If you had not married and been withdrawn from Westfeld's society, we people of Bückeburg should never have known you, nor you us." About New Year 1774 he began a long series of sermons on the life of Jesus, which made a great impression on the whole parish, especially on the peasants of a neighbouring village, who would trudge to church Sunday after Sunday to hear what Parson Herder had to say, bringing their Bibles with them for the sake of reference to unusual texts.

Another point of interest was the visit of Zimmermann, who

came over from Hanover to attend the Countess in August after Herder's marriage; and in December came Pegelow, the kindly physician of Strassburg days, who objected to abstract questions, now on his way back to Russia after travels in England and France for health's sake. As he was to pass through Königsberg the Herders sent greetings and some real Westphalian rye-bread (*Pumpernickel*) by him for the Mage of the North. Meanwhile, the correspondence with Lavater continued with great warmth of friendship. Herder's letters, as a rule, are fairly calm and connected, but Lavater always wrote in the extreme *Sturm und Drang* style, full of dashes, parentheses, and exclamations that become a weariness after a time. Occasionally we get an interesting glimpse of the world as it looked then; as when Herder speaks of the enthusiasm with which they had all been reading Bürger's *Lenore*, just appeared upon the scenes, inspired, as Bürger said, by Herder's own writings. For English readers there will also be interest in this notice of a young artist-friend, a son of a Zurich painter of some note, whom Lavater calls Füssli, better known to us as Henry Fuseli, of our Royal Academy:

"A man of the greatest imagination," Lavater says, "always in extremes, always original; Shakespeare's painter—English and Swiss—poet and painter. His letters—hurricane and storm. Reynolds [our Sir Joshua] prophesies he will be the greatest painter of his time. His wit is boundless. Does little except by pencil and brush, but when he acts he must have a hundred yards clear room, or he's the ruin of everything. Has swallowed all Greek, Latin, English, and Italian poets. His look is lightning, his word a storm, his jest death, and his vengeance hell. At close quarters he is hard to put up with."

Though this last statement seems probable, yet this was just the man to pose as painter for the *Sturm und Drang*. As to Sir Joshua's prophecy we may be allowed to be more dubious, for from our point of view we can see a boy of sixteen, named William Blake, creeping about round Westminster Abbey, and we know that the shopkeeper Turner, who cuts hair in Maiden Lane, shall shortly have a son.

But, after all, the best point about these letters is that they

enable us to watch how by degrees the image of Goethe was impressing itself on the minds of men. In November, 1773, Lavater writes, "Goethe has sent me his *Götz von Berlichingen*. It seems that we shall come nearer each other." (It was the next summer in fact that the world-child made that strange progress through the Rhineland, with "Prophet to right of him, Prophet to left of him," in the shape of Lavater and Basedow.) "I rejoice with trembling," he goes on; "amongst all writers I know no greater genius—and perhaps he is also the keenest and most open-hearted sentimentalist, but"—of this Lavater has shrewd doubts. "At all events, the man can be of endless service to me, can elevate me, warm, inspire, polish, humble, purify." To which Herder replies without intentional depreciation that in many respects Füssli seems to him to be what Goethe is. "Pay attention to Goethe," he adds, "he is a great painter." Lavater thinks the comparison good, but is not altogether satisfied, "for Goethe is more man and Füssli more poet," which in a certain sense is a true judgment, surprising as it seems.

But to return to the quiet cot in Bückeburg. Throughout the autumn, from August onwards, we find Herder hard at work again, "working like a horse" as he says, under the stress of an elevated mental excitement, partly due no doubt to the calm content of his married life after the perplexities of the last few years, partly to his newly-awakened zeal for Hebraic religion. He was also anxious to clear himself of debt. His pamphlet entitled *Another Philosophy of History*, now included in the *Propyläen or Introductions to the History of Mankind*, was finished in August; the first three parts of the *Earliest Records of the Human Race* (*Aelteste Urkunde*) were written in August and September. In October a volume of German ballads with some translations from the English, especially of Shakespeare, was ready for the press; in November he wrote the twelve *District Letters for Preachers* (*Provinzialblätter*); and in December he began his *Commentaries on the New Testament*; to say nothing of some reviews for Nicolai, the last he ever sent, the

last indeed that Nicolai was likely to accept from a man who could write such works as the above. A new impulse of production had taken possession of him, and through the beautiful days of autumn, as Karoline tells us, these works were poured out as from a single flood of feeling; "he would often be up and at work by four o'clock in the morning. His mind was perfectly attune—cheerful, earnest, quiet, and sublime. He toiled without ceasing. I well remember that the first part (of the *Älteste Urkunde*) was finished in six weeks. Those days were unique, happy, never to be forgotten";¹ and Herder writes to Lavater, "These are the first things I am glad to have written; and my Swiss girl is the cause of it all." Yet in this very happiness lies the sadness. Most people have felt how sad it is to look back on the time when, under the excitement and eager joy of conviction, a piece of work was done which afterwards the outside world took ill. And, even if the world be right and we are disillusionised, yet like the man who applauded in the empty theatre we regret the time before our eyes were opened, and find it hard to thank our friends.

In fact Herder's writings during this period entangled him in greater difficulties than any before, and, in the estimate of some people, who pack a man's works all together without respect to date and development, have gone far to diminish his reputation. And yet it sometimes seems as though a large part of a great man's work were of importance, not for its own sake but for its effect on himself; and if we regard the works of this period as forming one whole, for the aim in all is one, we shall find that Herder was now fighting for a great idea, which absorbed his own individuality and personal aims; that he was acting as the champion of religion, nothing less, and no one could do more—whether by religion we mean science, art, or religion.² We shall find too, that, when the joy of production

¹ *Reminiscences*, vol. i. p. 239.

² "He who has science and art has religion too; he who has not both of these had best have religion": Goethe. The difficulty is that such uses of words too often lead to jargon.

gave place to the vexations of criticism, he was learning something of a lesson which he never perfectly mastered. For to gain some idea of Herder's position in his approaching contests with Michaëlis, and Schlözer of Göttingen, and even with Spalding and his followers of Berlin, we may try to imagine how some English canon or bishop would fare if, with more fervour than research, he took up arms against certain ruthless German expositors of modern times. When we feel strongly that we are in the right on any point, it seems so easy just to go in and win; and Herder had yet to learn that there are only two ways of reducing a fortress of the enemy, either to take it by storm with its own weapons, on fair ground and by sheer hard work, or to go calmly past on the way to victory, leaving it behind as a thing of no importance, to be starved out by others at their leisure.

As the volume of *Ballads and Translations* was withdrawn before it was printed, and did not take its final shape till five or six years after this, the most important for us of this series of works is the treatise on the *Philosophy of History*, which forms the link between what we might call Herder's first period of Literature and his period of Dogma. In calling it "*Another*" (*Auch eine*) *Philosophy of History*, Herder seems to have been sneering at one of the fashionable pursuits of the day; for under the influence of Rousseau and Montesquieu every little philosopher was busy spinning cobweb theories on the progress of man, his destiny and possible perfection. Such writers habitually regarded every period of history from what they were pleased to consider the high and enlightened ground of the eighteenth century; all other ages seemed to them "dark" in comparison with the favoured century that was illuminated by the blessed radiance of their clear-as-daylight philosophy; and the darkest of all were the ages when religion was a real thing; for they did not know that a historian without sympathy is like a photographer who thinks he can produce a portrait. Want of sympathy we need certainly never fear to find in Herder; like a poet he could place himself at will in any age and in any nation. This indeed,

as will be seen, was his chief claim to be counted among the poets; yet it is with some surprise that we find how completely in this treatise he has departed from the customary point of view of the eighteenth century. Hitherto his writings for the most part have been in harmony with the spirit of the time, though sometimes they seemed discordant from the raising of the pitch; but now he puts himself completely out of concord with his age. "This book," he writes to Lavater, "is fire and hot coals on the skull of our century." The illuminated of the time thought he was crying back; we of to-day can see that he was uttering prophecy. For he was a forerunner of the band of modern Protestants for things spiritual against the ethics of material limitation; a band whose champions bear such names as Schiller and the Transcendentalists, Novalis and the Romantic school; Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley; Maurice and his reformers; Newman and the Oxford movement; Ruskin and Carlyle; Emerson; Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelites; a band that is at unity with itself in spite of the diversity of its members; whose watchword is Failure, and their failure victory. Every shore is strewn with their wrecks, every heart burns at the sound of their names.

But, leaving this ground to the sufficient protection of its heroes, we will return to Herder's protest, which begins calmly enough with a sketch of man's progress from the sweet childhood of the East, through the boyhood of Egypt and Phœnicia and the youth of Greece, till in Rome he reached man's estate. Even in this first part there are hints that the writer is going a way of his own; he lays much emphasis on the influence of locality in the development of a race, its manners and arts; he cannot forbear a sneer at Voltaire, who could see nothing but priestcraft in the beautiful story of patriarchal life, so calm and pure in its reverence for authority compared to the anarchic freedom and "cold philosophy" of these later days; he accuses Winckelmann of neglecting the arts of other nations under the powerful attraction of Greece; and he is inclined to think that it was Phœnicia, with her trade and shipping, rather than Greece,

whose hands took freedom first into them, a weanling child.¹ Dropping the metaphor from the growth of the individual, he proceeds to trace the ethical and political influence of Christianity on the chaos that succeeded the division of the Roman Empire; but he first stops to admit the folly of an attempt to characterise any large nation or period under some general term, for no single qualification can be universally applicable, seeing that no two moments of history are the same, and that, by a kind of law of compensation, we constantly find the most opposite extremes existing side by side in the same race.² Coming to the Middle Ages, he takes up the sword in defence of the great ideals—Chivalry, Knighthood, the Crusades, and a Universal Church—in opposition to the blind sneers of Hume, Voltaire, and Robertson. In this he may have been partly influenced by Goethe's picture of feudalism in *Götz*; but, at all events, this is one of the earliest waves of that flood of mediævalism which has since swept over Europe; and it agrees with a saying of Herder's, reported by Jean Paul many years afterwards, that "he wished he had been born in the Middle Ages," a wish which many people during these last hundred years have not ceased pathetically to echo, till at length some seem to have thought they actually were in the Middle Ages—with results both interesting and laughable.

After this it might be thought that Herder would agree with those who opine that all would have been well if Erasmus instead of Luther had held the management of the Reformation. But he is far from agreeing.

"'Why,' cries the soft philosopher, 'why, oh why, is not every such Reformation rather carried on without a Revolution? The human spirit (*Geist*) might have been left to go its own quiet way, whereas now passions in the storm of action have only created new prejudices, and we have exchanged evil for evil.'"

The plaint has been repeated in almost the same words by plenty of "soft philosophers" in our time, who seem to think

¹ Swinburne's "Songs before Sunrise," *The Litany of Nations*.

² For a development of a similar theory of compensation, cf. Emerson's *Essays*, vol. i. "Compensation."

they have made a great discovery ; but Herder would have none of them. "This calm advancement of the human spirit for the amelioration of the world," he exclaims, "is only a phantom of our own brains, not God's way in nature." Reform implies disturbance ; the reformer must have passion ; it is his "patent of office."

The rest of the treatise is a bitter and railing accusation against the mechanical spirit of modern times, mechanical in philosophy, education, and life as well as in appliances and inventions ; free thought which was preached as a panacea was no end in itself ; culture, with its dictionaries and bits of inane trickery, after all seemed only a vanity. Herder takes his stand where Ruskin and Carlyle join hands ; we are irresistibly reminded of the *Latter-day Pamphlets*, and that in style as well as in subject ; we are shown the pessimist side of an optimist's thought. And yet Herder did not fail to see the true position of his century, for, boldly taking Frederick¹ and Voltaire as his types, he distinctly sets forth the virtues and failings of his time as exhibited in its two most distinguished men, and concludes that, in spite of all philosophers and illuminated despots, it may be an instrument in the hands of fate for good to some far-off future. For, he maintains, the whole history of man follows the rule of some inexorable power, which we must call Fate if we may not call it Providence ; and to the black riddle of fate there is no key, unless, as Herder almost hints, it be the key of faith in the Christian revelation.

In the theological works that immediately succeeded this philosophy of history the key is not only hinted at. The first of these was the first volume of the *Aelteste Urkunde*, in three parts ; the second volume, also in three parts, was not published till two years later ; but all the published works of this Bückeburg period really fall under the same category, being in fact parts of one book. It will be simpler, therefore, to consider them in close succession, and so obtain some idea of the whole. And

¹ His account of Frederick is quoted at length by Lavater in his *Physiognomische Fragmente*.

this can be done briefly, for the works have little value in themselves, and for the most part have become a weariness to the flesh. It may be that all theological treatises acquire this character as they grow old, if they have it not to start with, and that I am inclined to be impatient with Herder from want of experience in this kind; at all events, in toiling carefully through the *Aelteste Urkunde* and the rest, I have found little to relieve the dreary oppression of the whole. In the first place, the style is annoying and often almost incomprehensible; it is *Sturm und Drang* prose transferred to theology, full of exclamations, questions, parentheses, and unusual words. Haym has given a long list of the words and phrases which Herder seems to have coined for the occasion; and Georg Müller, the editor of Herder's works, tells us, in his preface to the *Urkunde*, that several writers had sent him copies of this work translated into ordinary German. Even Hamann, who himself wrote like an oracle gone mad, called this thing a *monstrum horrendum*, and Merck was scandalised past endurance. But, further than this, Herder was as yet deficient in special knowledge for the work, and want of knowledge at times seems even worse than a bad style. People used to say that he was "too much a poet to be good at exegesis," and in a certain sense it was true, though it is hard to deplore it; for the worth of one poet is not to be expressed in terms of exegesis; but yet, if the poet will interpret, he must have something more to go upon than phantasy and smatterings of learning. Compared to the vast knowledge of Michaëlis, who had devoted his life to the study of the East, Herder's learning was very thin (Kant called the *Urkunde* "a triumph without victory"); and, compared to the flood of light which has now been thrown on early history by oriental scholars, who have deciphered the cuneiform character and the hieroglyphics, and have revealed the cities of old, Herder's light would be great darkness. In his time, too, comparative mythology, to which he trusts for support for the leading principle of the *Urkunde*, was still young and unsure; it had not really advanced much beyond the point reached by Cudworth, to whom Herder

refers with a certain amount of approval. Indeed, if the English reader would form some idea of the *Urkunde*, let him imagine the second and third volumes of Cudworth's *Eternal and Immutable Morality* translated into the German of Jean Paul, bereft of his humour.

We feel, too, that in this case Herder has set himself distinctly in opposition to the stream of the world's thought, and as long as he continued thus there could be no doubt how he would fare. Yet these works were by no means worthless. They aroused much enthusiasm as well as enmity at the time. Many people read them gladly, especially the Swiss circle, hitherto inclined to regard Herder with suspicion. Their influence on true science may have been good, if only through the strength that opposition gives. But, as I have tried to show above, their real advantage was to the writer himself, and to us they are chiefly interesting as a psychological study, for they present us with one more instance how strange things a man of real wisdom may see, if he can shut his eyes tight enough.

The *Earliest Records of the Human Race* (*Die Aelteste Urkunde des Menschengeschlechts*) is a sort of running commentary on the book of Genesis as far as the Flood. It was intended to be the fulfilment of the work on Hebrew archæology of which we saw the first outlines in Riga. The position of the author, however, is, as might be expected, very different. The first volume treats of the story of Creation. Herder says he wrote it with his face to the east, and gazing out at the sunrise morning after morning; he was therefore led to imagine that he found in the story some mystical allegory of the dawn. But this is not all, for he maintains that the seven days were arranged into a mystical hieroglyphic, a divided hexagon, with one point as it were at the waist; and this he traces elaborately through the nations of antiquity—Egypt, Chaldæa, Saba, Phœnicia, and the philosophers of Asia Minor. This hieroglyphic formed a traditional song, which was of course not composed by Moses, but, coming from a far higher source, was restored by him in its original purity. He then proceeds to examine the

rest of the story in ordinary sermonie fashion, interspersing rather commonplace remarks and moral reflections on marriage, modesty, parentage, and the like. Far the best part of the work is his scornful satire against the persiflage and unsympathetic scepticism of Voltaire and other so-called advanced thinkers of the time. He shows some real humour in his contemptuous description of those who could not make up their minds to reject either science or revelation, but, in order to reconcile the two, imagined that man once went on all fours, till, as it fell upon a day, seeing an apple on a tree, he reached up towards it, and, finding the advantage of standing on his hind legs, straightway called the tree the Tree of Knowledge. With this kind of timorous folly Herder had no patience, though it may appear hard to decide whether his own theories at this period were much more scientific.

In the *Letters to Preachers* we are in rather clearer air, though the spirit is still the same; and they mark the change that had befallen even more distinctly. In early Riga days Herder had been an enthusiastic disciple of Spalding of Berlin and his doctrines of Christian and clerical duties; even within the last year or two he had recommended his works to the Countess, together with the writings of Jerusalem, who was treading the same path. But now to Lavater, who himself had sat at Spalding's feet, he writes, "Your Spalding vexes me more and more daily. His second edition of *The Preacher*¹—not a word what a preacher should be before God and man, only what he is allowed to be, and would like to be, if he can be anything at all, under privilege in the states of his most glorious majesty the King of Prussia." Jerusalem pleases him no better; he accuses both of time-serving and even deceit, though, when Lavater protested against such abuse of his old master, he hastened to withdraw the charge, but nevertheless repeated that, though he would not compare himself with such men for a moment, yet as teachers, preachers, and Christians they did not

¹ Spalding's book *On the Use of the Preacher's Office*.

satisfy him any longer. Finally, in protest against Spalding's book, he published his *Provinzialblätter*, of which there were originally fifteen letters, though in Müller's edition these are reduced to twelve.

Spalding, seeing his fellow-parsons sore bestead in a Prussia whose king suffered every man to go to heaven his own way, especially if he wore a good soldier, had ventured to raise his voice, tuned to the "common-sense" pitch, in defence of his office; had pleaded, something in Wordsworth's style, that it was a good thing for a country to have men of decent culture scattered abroad amongst the ignorant, to expound the scriptures and above all enforce the first principles of general morality. The worthy man had done great service in his time by setting at nought the barren disputes on dogma, into which the Lutheran and Reformed theories of religion had fallen; but he unfortunately failed to perceive this great flood of deeper feeling, which under one form or another was beginning to surge through Europe. In these *District Letters* he seems first to have felt the force of the tide. For to Herder his office needed no defence; he will hear of no temporising with powers and dominions; the preachers of God were sent out conquering and to conquer; and he is ruthless against the polite parson, the dilettante priest of culture, that stickles for "good form," and stands in awe before conventions. This was not Luther's way; and throughout these *Letters* Herder quotes largely from Luther, and regards him more and more as the type of active priesthood, though he does not deny the benefits of Melancthon's sweet counsel. After tracing the history of the priest from the earliest times, when he was all in all, and exposing the shallowness of Hume's sneering comparison between the soldier and priest, he passes on to criticise a former work of Spalding's, *On the Value of the Feelings in Christianity*; and the rest of the *Letters* are chiefly occupied with contradictions of the doctrine, that the clergy's main duty is to inculcate correct morality. He shows how different a thing is demonstration from belief; he protests against the commonplace morality of sermons and

the frigid disquisitions on the advantages of virtue, "for God does not reveal himself in a moral discourse." Throughout all these *Letters* Herder's aim is clear enough; he is trying to offer a solution to the difficulty that has perplexed Europe for four hundred years, the difficulty that has been at the root of all the great movements and revivals, as well Catholic as Puritan, the Methodists and Irvingites, Positivism, and the Salvation Army; the difficulty of reaching out to something beyond the morality of the best policy, so that morality may become a thing of life, and the truths of the understanding be transformed into religion.

The same high purpose dictated all Herder's important work during this period. Hardly were the *Letters* finished when he began the *Commentaries on the New Testament*, which, together with *The Epistles of the two Brothers of Jesus*, occupied him during 1774, and appeared about Easter in the following year. The *Commentaries* are supposed to be derived from "a newly-discovered oriental source," the *Zend-Avesta* of Zoroaster, recently translated into French; and Herder, after sketching the history of the interval between the Old and New Testaments, tries to show that it was through a mixture of the Chaldaean doctrines of Zoroaster, acquired during the Captivity, with the Platonism of Philo and the Alexandrines, that Judaism reached the sublime mysticism of St. John's Gospel. The book is indeed a commentary illustrating this gospel by kindred passages from the *Zend-Avesta*, together with a running explanation by the author. People who are judges of the subject consider this Herder's most orthodox work. For us it is chiefly significant as containing some traces of the influence which, probably in the summer and autumn of 1774, Spinoza was beginning to exercise on his mind. Before this he does not seem to have studied Spinoza's *Ethics* for himself; but in the following February, writing to Gleim concerning Gleim's wonderful *Halladat*, or *Red Book*, he says :

"You have well expressed the oriental thought, that heaven is universal, that before God space and time vanish, but that he can only

exist where thought is and where is active love, which is the purest thought; that this is God, God in every point or rather in no point; it (*sie*, i.e. *wirkende Liebe*) is, as it acts, in eternity, raised above space and time, embracing all things, flowing in unity with all things that so think and love, and thus performs all the works that are done in the world, and is God! These ideas sound merely enthusiastic (*schwärmerisch*), but are the coldest, most precise metaphysic. Read Spinoza's *Morality*, especially the second and fourth books."

No less marked is Spinoza's influence in the otherwise Leibnitzian treatise on *Apprehension and Sensation* (*Erkennen und Empfindung*), which Herder wrote during this same year for the Berlin Academy. No prize was awarded, but Herder published his essay in a slightly different form, together with his *Plastik*, in 1778. A work which he called *Maran Atha*, on the Apocalypse, the first sketch for which was also written at this time, was not finally published till 1779. These writings, together with the twelve published sermons on the *Life of Jesus*, which display the same tendencies as the others, in a simpler and more practical style, may be classed together as the main result of the Bückeburg period. Even from this slight sketch there can be no doubt in the reader's mind in which direction the tide of Herder's thought was for the present bearing him. If, after reading these works, there could be any question about the matter, it would be at once set at rest by the correspondence with Lavater, who, as has been already said, was even offended and startled when Herder's zeal for religion drove him to speak slightly of the old leaders, Spalding and Jerusalem.

After having read both the works as published and the correspondence, I have not the slightest doubt that Herder was perfectly honest throughout the whole of this business. I have not the slightest doubt that the great hope of his heart was that to him, too, in these latter days, it might be granted to strike a great blow for religion's sake, such as Luther struck in stronger times. I am the more anxious to insist upon this because a recent writer has made the works of this period the ground for bringing against Herder the foulest charge that can be brought

against any man—the charge of selling the spirit of truth for money.¹

It must be clear, from the sketch of Herder's works during this period, how little there would be in his honest opinions that could offend the most orthodox. If any offence was to be given, it would be, as we saw in the case of Lavater, from an excess of religious zeal rather than a defect. People who have grown old in orthodoxy do not like to have the calm of their opinions ruffled by the *Sturm und Drang* of a further religious development; and if these things were done in Lavater, himself the leader of the religious *Sturm und Drang*, what would be done amongst the placid orthodox of the old school? I should imagine that few in such a case would say that the support of the orthodox was “catered for.” On the internal or spiritual side the charge falls to pieces; and we will now take up the thread of Herder's external history and judge how far it could be substantiated there.

It is true that ever since his first meeting with Heyne Herder had cast a wistful eye upon Göttingen, and was inclined to think that, after all, a university life might be better than exile in Bückeburg; true, also, that even at the time of Herder's greatest orthodoxy Heyne, who took very small interest in modern religion, had sighed, “Would you were more orthodox;

¹ Or, to use the writer's own words: “There seems little doubt that Herder was tempted to cater for the support of the orthodox in view of this appointment (in Göttingen) in publishing his *Provinzialblätter an Prediger*. Not only so, it must be admitted that in his negotiations with the Göttingen authorities he betrayed a pitiful want of manliness and dignity.”^a I take the words ‘tempted to cater for the support of the orthodox’ to mean that Herder said what he did not really believe in order to gain some material advantage therefrom; that he being unorthodox was willing to sacrifice what he thought true to please the orthodox; not merely that he stated his honest views in order to show those in power what sort of man they had to deal with. For, if this last had been the writer's meaning, he would have used other words than ‘tempted’ and ‘cater,’ of which the one implies sin and the other meanness; and I suppose there is neither sin nor meanness in what must necessarily be done by every candidate for office and trust either in published works or in examination or in speeches to constituents.

^a The *Fortnightly Review* for October 1882. *Herder*, by James Sully.

people only know you as a man of letters, and one has no theological work of yours to point to"; and had added, with an ironical smile, "some people want an orthodox preacher, others a man of worldly wisdom and tact—a clever knave in short." Whereupon Herder had answered in the same tone that, so far as orthodoxy went, no one would have cause to complain of him; that he trusted, after all his experience, he was not deficient in worldly wisdom; and that, if a clever knave was wanted to conceal the weak points of the office, he was ready in a certain sense to undertake the post.¹ For he knew theoretically, as well as most people, that all professions contain something of compromise; but he also knew that the only way in the end to defend a position from attack is to raise it from the common-place to a higher ideal. Herder's only mistake throughout was in supposing he excelled in worldly wisdom, in which he was almost as strikingly deficient as Don Quixote. It is truly sad to see a man with such views of the realities of life, and the beauty of activity as his, continually boasting his keen practical sense, and continually failing to use the right means to an end. In this case it is quite possible that, under the advice of Heyne and Brandes the Hanoverian minister, it was partly to explain his new theological position to the orthodox of Göttingen that Herder wrote this series of works. But the smallest amount of "worldly wisdom" would have told him that nothing could have been wider of the mark, and indeed he himself, speaking of the *Aelteste Urkunde*, insists that they were written not for Göttingen but for Germany.

The right of the appointment in Göttingen seems to have lain between the Hanoverian ministers, Brandes and Bremer, and the Göttingen consistory, chiefly university authorities who on this occasion displayed all the petty rancour characteristic of the hide-bound pedantry in which Göttingen university-men even excelled their fellows, as we learn from Heine's mocking laughter fifty years afterwards.² Towards the end of January

¹ Herder's Correspondence with Heyne, letter 23. (*Von und an Herder.*)

² See most of Heine's earlier work, especially the *Harzreise*.

1774 Herder was invited to preach before the ministers in Hanover, but the visit was a complete failure. It does not appear that he even preached, and the silly etiquette of the court troubled him as much as it had troubled Zimmermann; more, indeed, for he seems to have found Zimmermann quite the courtier and favourite of society there, in spite of ill-health and melancholy humours. The polite seem to have objected to Herder's apparel as only fit for the company of peasants, which must have been a sore blow, and, under the pain of such insults, he scandalised propriety still more by unexpectedly disappearing, and betaking himself back to Bückeburg, a day or two after he had come, determined never to think of Göttingen again. In the spring, however, Brandes wrote demanding theological books from which to discover his real opinions. Herder at once sent the *Urkunde* and the *Provinzialblätter*; but Brandes, so far from supposing they were meant to "cater" for the support of the orthodox, was inclined to think such works could not have been more ill-timed; he deplored their warmth, and feared they would further confound the confusion of Göttingen, besides increasing the author's unpopularity. And he was right. Herder had not only failed to win the orthodox, but he had succeeded in offending three distinct parties, all largely represented in Göttingen; one of them almost identical with the orthodox themselves.

Whilst Herder was still writing for the Frankfurt paper of Schlosser and Merck he had reviewed in a hostile and rather flippant tone a dull and learned work, *An Introduction to Universal History*, by Schlözer, historian and professor in Göttingen. In this case, as in others, he had allowed his imagination to lead him beyond the safe ground of exact knowledge; and Schlözer, who, for good reasons, had never known the sweet dangers of imagination, devoted a whole volume to the exposure of Herder's ignorance of facts. The object of the book was printed on the title-page, and once more matter triumphed over spirit; for Schlözer's victory was of course complete, as far as it went. The review had been chiefly written to please Heyne, who was

not on the best terms with his colleagues, and, though both Hamann and Claudius rushed eagerly to the defence, Herder wisely let the matter drop as best it could.

Worse still was the offence given by the *Urkunde* to the great Michaëlis and his party, who were naturally very strong in Göttingen, though Michaëlis himself, being a true artist after his kind, and conscious of right, seems to have paid little attention to the matter. But the worst blow of all was due to those very *Provinzialblätter* themselves. We are told in the *Reminiscences* that whilst he was writing these, and, indeed, most of his works, Herder was so carried away by the enthusiasm of his convictions that he could pay regard neither to personalities nor anything else that came in his path. But, when he saw these letters printed, in alarm lest they should hurt Spalding's feelings, he hastened to write and assure him of his great regard for him and his works, in spite of minor differences; at the same time, being anxious to act perfectly fairly, he inclosed a copy of the book. Spalding, who was a benign and reverend gentleman, though sore let and hindered in such a dominion as Prussia, answered in calm and friendly tone, quietly defending himself on one or two points. But his followers, chief of whom was a man named Teller, were not going to let the matter rest so. They obtained Herder's letter and sent it the round of Berlin, Brunswick, and Göttingen, not under orders of secrecy. It appears to have been accompanied by a guide or explanation from Teller's hand pointing out the various atrocities of the writer, and was everywhere received by exclamations of "What double-dealing!" "What hypocrisy!" Even Hamann's faith was shaken for a time, though he had just written some "Prolegomena" in defence of the *Urkunde*.

Spalding's party might be described as the liberally compliant, or the orthodox of sufficient reason, forming a link between the Pietists and the dogmatic orthodox. They had wide influence, even such a man as the extreme Pietist Lavater, as we have seen, counting himself one of Spalding's disciples be-

fore he began to keep consciences on his own account. And now that this whole party was set against Herder, nominally because his letter had proved him double-faced, really because his ideal of religion was higher than theirs, to whom should he turn for support? In these writings he had boldly declared his position, and was proved too intellectual for a Pietist, too imaginative for the dogmatic followers of Wolff, and a downright opponent of the liberalism of Spalding. Least of all, since his onslaught upon his future colleagues, Michaëlis and Schlözer, could he appeal to his former allies, the apostles of untrammelled investigation and scientific enlightenment. To such a pass had his enthusiasm for what he considered the truth brought the man who expressed himself willing to play the "clever knave," to conciliate all parties, and had boasted of his "worldly wisdom."

The storm broke in July 1774, whilst Herder was in his favourite Pyrmont with Karoline on a short holiday. Here he enjoyed the society of Zimmermann; and here, for the first time, he met Mendelssohn, with whom he had occasionally corresponded before. One letter, at all events, he had written to him from Riga, questioning the main conclusion of his *Phædo* on the immortality of the soul. But his pleasure was laid waste by the news of Teller's libel.

"Pyrmont," he writes to Lavater, "ought to be a valley of the celestials to me; and lo! around it has gathered a storm which has plunged me into the depths. All the excellent people there, in whom I take so much pleasure, Zimmermann not excepted, are seen through a thick, dull cloud . . . My birthday is near (his thirtieth birthday). I wanted to make the occasion a kind of initiation, and such it has become, though otherwise than I thought.

He returned to his quiet home, and the sympathetic comfort of his wife and the Countess. On the 28th of August—Goethe's birthday—"Lucina knocked at the door," and his first child was born;¹ the Countess still taking a pathetic interest, for her only daughter had died a month or two before. But, in spite of

¹ Wilhelm Christian Gottfried Herder, died 1806.

all, the world long seemed to him a "vale of woe," as he wrote to Hamann, whose confidence in his disciple had been completely restored. During this autumn Herder had some hopes of an appointment in a new university that was to be founded at Mitau, which would take his memory back with vague longings to Riga, at this distance looking so free and happy; but the schemes came to nothing.

Late in the autumn he was again induced to visit Hanover—much against his will—by the representations of Brandes, Bremer, and Westfeld, who were all really anxious "not to lose such a pearl for their university." Herder stayed with them from Friday to Monday, and writes to Heyne that he went through some comical scenes. The question seems to have resolved itself into whether the appointment was to be given to Herder, or to his bitterest enemy—Teller himself. Here is, at all events, an excellent basis for comedy; and we can imagine the ludicrous manœuvres of those ministerial and consistorial persons who, having Herder in the flesh before them, but a fear for the peace of Göttingen in their hearts, were painfully anxious to say "yes and no" at the same moment, and found the trick so difficult. The crisis of the comedy must have been when, as Herder writes, "as they were under the delusion that I had come to preach, I thought it best to refuse with the utmost courtesy." Whereupon, one of the ministers thought Herder would like to hold a conference with the consistory,—“but I thought good not to accept the proposal; but with all courtesy, grace, and friendliness to let the matter lose itself in the far-off azure of heaven. And so the two things—Herder and Hanover—separated from one another.”¹ If any one after this thinks that Herder was capable of selling the spirit of truth for money, I suppose he may go on his way with something of the self-content of the man who, having seen his own wit, saw more than all the world beside.

About this same time Herder sent to Zimmermann, for a

¹ To Heyne, letter 38. (*Von und an Herder.*)

Hanover journal, a short treatise on the question already discussed by Lessing, *How the Ancients represented Death*; but, like so many of Herder's writings, this did not take its final form till some years afterwards (in 1786). He was also engaged on an essay concerning *The Causes of the Decline of Taste*, which was crowned by the Berlin Academy in June 1775. Though written in a calmer style than the other works of this period, the spirit is thoroughly Teutonic, and quite in accordance with Herder's former theories of art; for, in a sketch of the history of the periods when the arts have been most highly developed, he proves that imitation is always worthless; that the taste of Louis XIV.'s age was inane, for true art must be founded on the people, and declines with the loss of liberty and reality; also that art has no necessary connexion with virtue, but is a kind of force of nature running through time, now appearing, now unseen, but never lost, "for force is indestructible."

The rest of the winter was spent at Bückeburg in comparative peace, Herder continuing his theological works and instructing a favourite page of the Countess. In February the Superintendent of the district died, and Herder succeeded in his room. A Superintendent is an ecclesiastical officer to whom I imagine the English archdeacon—or, in some respects, the bishop—corresponds; for he examines, performs the ordinations, introduces the young clergy to their office, and generally makes himself useful in matters of discipline and Church government. Hardly had Herder been appointed when the Count, whose darling fortress was probably in want of repair, informed him that he intended to divert the income of the office "*ad pios usus*," as he expressed it, with notable irony. Herder protested in the name of himself and his successors, and, under the influence of the Countess Maria, the Count gave way, contenting himself with subtracting the same amount from Herder's previous income. This arrangement was not likely to make things smooth; and, when soon afterwards Zachariä left Göttingen, Herder naturally turned his eyes again to the university.

At Easter, Hartknoch came and brought them a son of

Herder's dead ister Neumann, whom he had long intended to adopt; and early in June, Kanter, the bookseller of Königsberg—Herder's earliest patron—paid them a visit. In Bückeburg itself, too, the family had become very intimate with the cavalry-officer von Zanthier, who, we remember, was taken for Herder when he first arrived, owing to his dashing mien and the scar on his face. Towards the end of June, a letter was received from the court of Eutin, entreating Herder to go and look after the young prince, who had caused them all so much trouble, and was now engaged to be married, but instead of attending to his betrothed was moping in Darmstadt, bent on ending his gloomy questionings by a plunge into the Roman Catholic Church. Under pretext of a visit to relations, Herder at once set off with his wife and son, and they spent three or four happy weeks in the old familiar scenes. As to his real mission Herder was partially successful, for, though the young prince was obstinate against his betrothal, he retired to Eutin and gave up thoughts of the Holy Church. Herder preached once more in the place where he had "preached away his maiden's heart" five years before; Merck was coldly polite, but more amiable than might have been expected; and the visit was made doubly interesting by an introduction to Friedrich Karl von Moser, then prime minister in Darmstadt, and a warm admirer of Herder's recent works. Zimmermann, too, was there on his way to Switzerland; and, before the Herders left, Goethe himself arrived, fresh from that wonderful Swiss tour with the Stolbergs, in which he tried to tear himself from Lili. A day was spent in a visit to Homburg, where Karoline's true friend Lila was now living as Frau von Stockhausen; her garden-graves and tame animals given up, we must suppose, under the stern realities of motherhood and a matter-of-fact husband.

Towards the end of July the party journeyed with Goethe and Merck to Frankfurt, and so to Bückeburg by way of Pyrmont. Here, for the first time, Herder met Anacreon-Tyrtæus Gleim, than whom assuredly a kinder-hearted, more forbearing man never trod this earth. We can imagine Karoline's joy in

introducing her husband to her “dear old father Gleim” (he was now fifty-six), the man who had shown her kindness, called her Psyche, and written verses to her in less happy days. He accompanied them to Bückeburg, and the friendship lasted unbroken till Gleim’s death. It was at the end of this July, too, that Herder received his first letter from the poet Lenz, then staying in Strassburg, courting Goethe’s Frederika, and causing his honest landlady trouble enough because he would not keep his room tidy, and had neglected to teach his pupil—Baron Kleist—“the difference between the religions—Catholic and Lutheran.”¹ Lenz writes to Herder in terms of almost extravagant admiration as the leader of the *Sturm und Drang* movement, of which he himself was an exaggerated—though in some respects a beautiful—type. He sent the manuscripts of his *Soldaten* and *Pandæmonium Germanicum*, to Herder’s great delight, and we shall meet him again before he sank into complete madness.

With Gleim’s departure the short interval of happiness came to an end, and Herder found himself involved in new troubles. The Count considered himself unfairly treated because he imagined Herder was in secret communication with the court of Eutin, and it is probable he had not forgiven Herder’s reluctance to devote his income as Superintendent “*ad pios usus*.” From the beginning the office had brought Herder nothing but anxiety and annoyance, and now, during his absence in Darmstadt, a worse thing had befallen. A young man named Stock, a person of ill repute and dubious antecedents, had appeared upon the scene. Some time before the consistory of another province had rejected him with disgrace in what we should call the bishop’s examination. Shortly afterwards, having gained the first prize in the Hanover lottery, he had laid out 200 thaler (say 30*l.*) in buying a wretched living from an impecunious nobleman. He applied again for ordina-

¹ See an excellent letter by Lavater, quoted in *Aus Herders Nachlass*, Band i. p. 217.

tion, but having been again rejected he grew warm, and indignantly demanded by what right he was kept out of his property—had he not bought the living for money? The consistory answered by prosecuting him for simony, and after betraying his friends into ruin he retreated to Bückeburg, and offered to advance 4,000 thaler (say between 500*l.* and 600*l.*) to the exchequer under promise of a living. It seems sad that the Count suffered such a transaction; but funds were so short, and the fortress so fair, and priests so unimportant. In September Herder held his examinations as Superintendent of the consistory, and Stock was summoned to appear. He sent a rude refusal, “ill-written and ill-spelt.” He was summoned again, and, as he deigned no answer at all, one of the ministers informed Herder that, by the Count’s command, this candidate was to be ordained without examination. Herder protested, firmly but with some tact in dealing with the Count’s weak point. He was answered, that the matter should be inquired into by a “special commission.” Becoming more indignant, he informed the Count that the matter did not fall under the jurisdiction of a special commission, and that he would resign and leave Bückeburg rather than act against his conscience. The Count coolly replied that he would find some other means. Whereupon Herder retired into seclusion for a few days,¹ and reappeared with a full treatise on the subject, written with all his warm eloquence, and more than his usual strength and indignation; for he was sure of the right, and had not studied Luther in vain. The conclusion was, that he refused ever to bring “a smoking brand of hell to the pulpit and altar,” and, for the rest, he would have no more to do with the odious business (*mit dieser stinkenden Sache*). The pamphlet was sent to the Count, who, being incapable of dishonour himself, was obliged to admit he had been in the wrong, and to recognise that a man who stood erect and caught at God’s skirts² was

¹ It was on this occasion that he stamped up and down his room till his feet were sore, and ground a piece of sealing-wax to powder between his hands.

² Browning’s *Instans Tyrannus*.

more than a match for all the fortresses and train-bands in the world. Stock was commanded to get him out of Bückeburg territory within twenty-four hours, or to expect worse things. Yet relations must have been rather strained in the Bückeburg circle; and for the first time the Countess took real offence at Herder's warmth.

From the midst of these troubles Herder again turned his eyes to his friends in Hanover and Göttingen. In August he had been offered the fourth professorship of theology with an annual income of 600 thaler (about 90*l.*),¹ but had been inclined to refuse on the ground that anything under 110*l.* was hardly sufficient for a married man in his position. This October, however, hearing that the offer was raised to nearly 100*l.*, he declared himself ready to accept, though just at the same time he learnt with extreme sorrow that his chief attraction to Göttingen was gone; for Therese Heyne had at length died of consumption, brought on from mourning for her children. On hearing of his acceptance the orthodox were up in arms, with more hostility than ever; and, as we are told that "it must be admitted that in his negotiations with the Göttingen authorities Herder betrayed a pitiful want of manliness and dignity," we must be on the alert, ready to admit whatever must be admitted. The facts are briefly these: the Hanoverian ministry having written to ask the views of the Göttingen theological faculty as to Herder's orthodoxy, the faculty characteristically replied that they could not answer plainly; there was much in Herder's writings they did not understand, but they were inclined to think he had interpreted the history of the Creation in an allegorical sense, &c. &c.² The Ministry laid this document before the King, Herder's enemies apparently suggesting to him what he should decree, for the respectable George himself was at that

¹ Mr. Lewes, however, divides thalers by six instead of seven to reduce to our pounds, so that the income would be rather more. One good authority, also, divides by five at this period. But all such comparisons are misleading and unimportant.

² *Actenstück*, quoted by Haym, vol. i. part ii. p. 731.

time only too much occupied by those upstart colonists across the Atlantic and the troublesome eloquence of Burke at home. He decided that, as Herder was not a doctor of theology, he must submit to a colloquy with the consistory on the subject of his belief. Herder indignantly refused, believing such a colloquy would be below the dignity of himself and his office.

“It is a matter of indifference to me,” he writes, “what people think of my works. It is possible that I am more orthodox and am more truly acquainted with Luther than they all. At all events the times are gone by when people went to Rome with their heads in their hands to prove their orthodoxy, and, besides, Göttingen is hardly Rome.”

But he was willing to hold a discussion by letter, or to write a treatise, for this was more dignified, and would not be so much like fighting in the dark. The Ministers, however, assured him that it was not to be thought of, and continued to urge the colloquy as the only means, “for they have prejudiced the King against you, and the King always abides by his first resolutions”; (alas, yes; to England’s sorrow!) Both Brandes¹ and Bremer represented to him that there was not the slightest degradation, that a colloquy was a mere matter of form and of no importance whatever, except to satisfy the King’s scruples. Bremer writes to Zimmerman that the *colloquium* was a regular and long-established custom in Hanover, implying no disparagement nor even distrust. Zimmerman added his entreaties; but for months Herder remained firm. It was not till the end of January 1776 that he was induced by the Ministry to talk the matter over with his old friend Westfeld. They met at Oldendorf, on the borders of Hanover; and Westfeld managed his case so cleverly that, before they parted, Herder had agreed, under certain conditions and protective clauses, to present himself at Göttingen for the degree of doctor, which was to be conferred without expense if he satisfied the authorities, and to preach at Hanover on his way there or back. On the last day

¹ This was the Brandes whose daughter Heyne married soon after Therese’s death, “with less difficulty than most men have in choosing a pair of boots.”—Carlyle’s essay on Heyne, *Miscellanies*, vol. ii. p. 78.

of January he writes to Zimmermann, "I am ready to tread the bitter road to Göttingen." Under the stress of sore difficulties in Bückeburg and the earnest remonstrances and representations of friends, he had yielded against his will, perhaps against his higher knowledge; but I think few could afford to call this "a pitiful want of manliness and dignity."

Whether Herder would finally have prevailed on himself to go or not, we who know something of his ways must remain in doubt. He himself had no doubt. "I would not go to the colloquium even if Weimar failed me," he writes to Heyne some weeks afterwards. "Since I said 'Yes,' under compulsion, my guiding genius has kicked up his heels (*sich gebäümt*), and a thousand times cried 'No.' " Fortunately, the very day after he had seen Westfeld he was saved from the pains of hesitation by an official letter offering him the post of General Superintendent in Weimar. Probably with a view to this, he had inserted a clause in his agreement with the Hanoverian ministry leaving himself free for any other appointment, for in December Goethe had hinted that such a thing was possible.

Ever since Herder's marriage Goethe and he had been on excellent terms, having forgotten the slight differences of the year before, as may be seen from Goethe's short but most friendly letters. Herder's answers are lost, but he always writes of Goethe with the greatest enthusiasm to Hamann, Zimmermann, and Lavater. Since *Werther* appeared in 1774 the name of Goethe had become a household word throughout Germany. Herder avoided open criticism of the book, perhaps purposely not to annoy the Countess, who was displeased at its want of religion, but this did not prevent him from writing to Hamann, "Goethe is a fellow full of wits (*Geist*) and life. He will be nothing that he cannot be with heart and soul (*von Herzen und mit der Faust*)"; and again, to Zimmermann, March 1776, "Goethe is swimming down to eternity on the golden waves of this century." On the other hand, Goethe had been delighted with the depth and phantasy of the *Urkunde*; and, though he had not much sympathy with the main theme

of Herder's theological works ("for," he writes, "the whole doctrine about Christ is so shadowy (*so ein Scheindung*) as to drive a man—a poor, limited, needy creature—to distraction"), yet he still continued to regard Herder as the centre and leader of the new school, of which himself and Lenz were at present the chief poets. There is no necessity for us, therefore, to join the majority in quoting the invitation of Herder to Weimar as one of the most striking instances of Goethe's disinterested generosity. Kindliness was once for all as natural to him as singing;¹ but in this case there was no need to strain. Besides, the idea was originally Wieland's, though it needed all Goethe's marvellous practical energy to carry it out. He had himself arrived in Weimar in November, and, as has been said, had written within a month to ask Herder if he could accept such a post. Herder joyfully promised, but all through the winter the orthodox of Weimar and blind-eyed magistrates gave trouble enough, in spite of the hearty good-will of the Grand Duke; who, indeed, Goethe writes, was "absolutely determined to have no priestly quibbling (*Pfaffentracasserien*) on orthodoxy and the devil."

At last Karl August imperiously set aside all objections; the post of General Superintendent and rector of the town church was offered in February, joyfully accepted at once, and, after some more disputes with the magistrates, the appointment was finally ratified in June. Herder was to arrive at Michaelmas. In the meantime, though in the midst of the gaieties and distractions of those early Weimar days, Goethe watched over his friend's interests with his keen and practical eye. He writes that he had turned some usurpers out of the parsonage-house, and incloses an account and ground-plan of the building, at the same time regretting that hedgehogs will build in the garden. In July he even went to church for the first time, to see what

¹ And yet Wordsworth has told us, and Mr. Matthew Arnold apparently agrees, that Goethe's poems are not "inevitable enough." Is it possible that they remembered the beginning of the fourth volume, book xvi. of *Aus meinem Leben*?

sort of a place Herder would have to preach in, and gives a quaint account of the old tombs and Cranach's pictures. He advises Herder to be as simple as possible in his first sermon, for people were much alarmed at the idea—had heard that he could not preach at all, and were afraid they would not be able to understand a word.

Meanwhile, at Bückeburg, regrets from Göttingen and Hanover had been pouring in, but to no purpose. Frequent letters were passing between Herder and Lavater, chiefly on the subject of the *Physiognomik*, which was now far advanced. Herder contributed portraits of himself,¹ Karoline, the Countess, and other friends, and sent ideal descriptions of Christ and Luther, as was the custom of the time. At Easter Claudius came with his "peasant girl" and child, and stayed a week; he was on his way to Darmstadt, where he had gained some appointment through Herder's influence with Friedrich Karl von Moser. Again the two friends determined to live together in the future, if by any means it could be brought about; but it never could. The only real tie to Bückeburg was severed in June by the death of the Countess. Every one but the Count had long known that the end was at hand, and she herself desired death with the yearning of a delicate and hapless soul. It was probably hastened by a superstitious theory, for she had noticed that all the important events in her life had happened in June. She died on her thirty-third birthday, and was buried at her summer residence of Baum amongst the peaceful trees.

In August Herder's second son was born; he lived to be a great favourite with his father, Goethe, and many others, and attained some real repute as a miner and geologist. He was a child rather remarkable for his god-parents, for, whereas three only are in England generally necessary to salvation, Herder, like most Germans, seems to have thought the more the better:² they

¹ Lavater's *Physiognomische Fragmente*, vol. ii. p. 102. The portraits were supposed to be fairly good.

² The eldest son of Frau von Stein had no less than fifty god-parents to superintend his spiritual welfare.

were Goethe, Hamann, Claudius, Karoline's brother Sigmund, and Frau von Bescheffer; and the boy was called Sigmund August Wolfgang.

In his farewell sermon Herder reviewed his life in Bückeburg, touching on his early despair at the prospect of uselessness, and suggesting some rather sharp reforms. On the 7th of September he preached by the monument to the Countess at Baum; and on the 10th, with his wife and two little sons,¹ he drove away from Bückeburg, its sad and happy memories, its loneliness and pleasant places. The Count was with him next summer at Pymont, and they talked only of her who was gone. In spite of all his strength, he never recovered from her loss, and died exactly a year after Herder's departure.

¹ Probably the nephew had returned to Mohrungen, for we hear nothing of him.

CHAPTER XII.

WEIMAR, 1776—1788.

“ Therefore I summon age
 To grant youth's heritage,
 Life's struggle having so far reached its term:
 Thence shall I pass, approved
 A man, for aye removed
 From the developed brute; a God, though in the germ.”

RABBI BEN EZRA.

I PROPOSE in this chapter to trace the general course of Herder's external life during the twelve years that passed between his arrival in Weimar and his departure for Italy. This may be done with safety, for the period is sufficiently definite, and the inner life corresponds with the external so closely as to remind us of the metaphor of the Pre-established Harmony; each being indeed with Herder, as with all but the favoured few, only a different aspect of the other. But, in spite of this, the historian's task is rendered difficult for two opposite reasons; for, though so much has been written about this Weimar period, that it is hard for him to decide what to select and what he may assume as known, yet original authorities from 1775 to 1786 are comparatively scanty. Goethe has left us no detailed account of these years, and the story must therefore be founded almost entirely on letters, which are too often but broken reeds to lean upon. Much must be read into letters before we can get at the heart of a matter, and, as the very best generally chronicle mere passing whims and aspects distorted by emotion, it is perplexing to assign to each event its due significance, and to say which course the stream is taking when the currents seem to run this way and that. Too often the historian is like a man who, having

heard in the night a cry as of grievous pain, straightway assumes that the agony is continuous; whereas it may well be that it thus afflicts the unknown man only once a year. Of aid from letters however, such as it is, we have certainly abundance. Out of Goethe's notes to Charlotte von Stein alone a tolerably correct story might be built, though Herder is hardly ever mentioned till after 1780. Herder's correspondence with Lavater continued up to that date, and he wrote frequently to Hamann, Hartknoch, and Gleim, and after 1780 to Knebel, Einsiedel, and others beside. But, ever since his unfortunate epistle to Spalding, Karoline tells us he grew more and more shy of letter-writing, and we find that she gradually took the burden of his correspondence upon herself. In her *Reminiscences* the story of these twelve years is very incompletely sketched in some twenty short pages.

Such then are our materials. And yet, monotonous and uneventful as this period was for the most part, I am inclined to regard it as on the whole the brightest and happiest of Herder's life, for it was the time of his greatest and highest activity; and during these years, especially towards the end, his mind is seen in its fullest development, though the results of his works were not so rapid and startling as in his earlier days. Happiness, in the ordinary sense of basking contentment, we must never expect to see in such a man, for it is hard to imagine a state of things under which he would not have winced now and again, like the galled jade; but for the most part there was light, and, best of all, it was a light that steadily increased; and it is not in blackest darkness that a man can rightly be called miserable, but only when light is on the wane.

The travellers probably drove straight through the Harz from Bückeburg to Halberstadt, where they visited Father Gleim, who, perhaps at Bückeburg the year before (though the date is doubtful), had been so much affected by Herder's preaching that he embraced¹ him as he descended the pulpit, and saluted him

¹ Gleim was much given to embraces. In one of his letters, probably to Uz, he narrates that as he was walking in his garden one morning he fell to

as an apostle. At Halberstadt Herder would again be in Prussian dominions after many long years of absence. Thence the party made their way southward with some difficulty, the roads being bad and perplexing, and on the 2nd of October, 1776, after the sun had set, their coach struggled over the Ettersberg, and at nine o'clock rolled into the little town on the Ilm.

As they passed through the walls the watchman, "who was gifted with an extremely loud voice," sang as welcome the old watchman hymn :

One thing is needful, and must be so;
Grant me, O Lord, this one to know.

They would then proceed up the hill, and along the narrow streets to the open square by the church, then known as the corn-market or the *Töpffenmarkt* (potters'-market), now as the Herder-platz,¹ and so they would reach the large, but rather ugly, house that stands huddled out of sight behind the church with its high-pitched roof. Here Karoline's brother was waiting to receive them, having made all necessary preparations. As travelling companion, or, according to Karoline, as "attendant angel" to him, there was also present a person of remarkable history, called Kaufmann, strongly recommended to Herder by Lavater as a steadfast apostle of the faith, and now posing in different towns of Germany as a martyr to the truth and the highest interests of man. Hamann, on the first acquaintance, had called him a *monstrum pulcherrimum*, and Herder and even

embracing an apple-tree with tears, fondly imagining that it was his beloved Uz. No wonder Goethe could see little to admire in such correspondence. This pretty picture—the rose-tipped snow of the apple-blossoms falling on the tearful old Teuton, appareled probably in a venerable dressing-gown—I owe to Sophie Weisse.

¹ A bronze statue to Herder was finally erected in this square, just in front of his church, in 1850, having been begun two years before but interrupted by the political commotions of that time. His *Prometheus*, set to music by Liszt, was performed on the occasion. I suppose it to be as good a likeness as such statues generally are, though it is far too massive. It is significant that he was the first of Weimar's heroes to be thus honoured.

Lavater saw through his imposture before long, and found him to be a false apostle and a martyr to a lie; but, for the present, he deceived even the shrewd and sceptical Wieland, and Karoline was especially enthusiastic in his behalf, for, judging all by her own simplicity of heart, she surrendered at once to appearances.

The first few days were naturally spent in unpacking the chattels, arranging the house, and paying the necessary calls. Herder was very well received by the Grand Duke, his mother Amalia, and his young wife Luise, who was living for the most part alone out in the summer residence of Belvedere. The old castle of Weimar had been burnt down only two years before, and she herself felt rather sore at heart over the wild ways along which this new favourite Goethe was leading her husband. As might have been expected, Herder took more interest in her than in the young Duke and his easy-going mother; and, as he seems to have been almost the only man of the circle with a pretence to ordinary morality, as she was almost the only woman, he long remained an especial favourite with her. Wieland was glad at his arrival, and received him with enthusiasm, though, in a letter, he regrets that "there is no one in Weimar worthy of Herder except Goethe, and he is much engaged with the Duke and business." Before a year had passed, however, Wieland modified this opinion considerably, for he found Goethe "cold as frost," and Herder "like an electric cloud." But the families continued very intimate, in spite of a certain vanity which Wieland's daughters seem to have inherited. Goethe himself was out in the country hunting ("shooting larks," if that be possible) when the party arrived, but on his return he visited them at once, and was "very joyful and friendly."

Herder's reception among the clergy and authorities of the district seems to have been better than was to be expected from their opposition to his appointment. Günther and Weber, who worked under him in the town, remained his true friends, and would often spend the evening with him. But in Weimar, as elsewhere, he found that he could not secure his position without a battle. It seemed as though he were doomed to be always

a fighter, and yet to such a man conflict brings little exhilaration, especially if, as in this case, the cause is merely personal. A fortnight after his arrival he was introduced to the consistory and took the oath; whereupon up rose the president, a hide-bound old man, who long continued a vexation to Herder's soul, and read an ordinance whereby "all the first class"—(probably the nobility, courtiers, &c., for in those days both at church and theatre there was a very stern line between these and the townsfolk in the sight of God and man)—"all the first class, who properly made up Herder's parish, were allowed to choose their spiritual adviser or father-confessor, according to their own pleasure." The post which Herder now held had been vacant for many years, for the Duchess Amalia was not a devout lady; and, no doubt, these clerical gentlemen of the consistory hoped to do a smart stroke of worldly business by taking advantage of his modesty and inexperience; and, besides, would it be safe to entrust the souls of the nobility to the keeping of a reputed heretic? And again, had not they borne the heat and burden of the day, and is not the labourer worthy of his hire? Only they were mistaken in their man. Herder indignantly protested on the spot, before the whole assembly, and refused to be put off by the president's quibble—worthy of Dogberry himself—that the clause in the vocation, "he shall also hear confession from those of the first class," signified "in so far, namely, as they wished to confess to him"; for Heaven forbid that the nobility should confess to any one under compulsion. Herder immediately wrote to the Grand Duke and Goethe, who were, unfortunately, away in the country, probably dancing with the peasant-girls at Ilmenau. The decisive answer in his favour did not come till the Saturday afternoon, and on the Sunday he was to preach his first sermon.

His anxiety was further increased by some absurd reports of his behaviour which had reached Weimar, as such reports will; how he preached in top-boots and spurs, and had his clothes trimmed with lace and ruffles, and the like. I am inclined to trace these rumours to the early mistake of the people

of Bückeburg, when they assumed that the dashing cavalier von Zanthier was their new minister in religion ; at all events, all Weimar had heard that this Herder was a friend of the strange and not altogether respectable young man Goethe, the Duke's new favourite. Some, perhaps, knew him as the leader of the *Sturm und Drang*, and probably most would have been more scandalised than astonished if he had mounted the pulpit in the beauty of nakedness. Georg Müller, who was certainly little inclined to unorthodoxy or any other kind of outrage, sweepingly describes the natives of Upper Saxony as "very stupid, and in ecclesiastical customs absurd and pharisaical." We can imagine, then, their relief (or shall we trust to the laws of human nature and say disappointment?) when Herder conducted the service in the ordinary Lutheran gown and surplice. And yet, in spite of his studied moderation, the story of the boots and spurs continued to go the round through Germany, even reaching Hartknoch in Riga ; and in Berlin the report was circulated, probably by Nicolai in his spite against the new "men of genius," that after every sermon Herder mounted his charger, galloped round the inside of the church three times (which would require some skill in horsemanship), and dashed out at the porch. All idle tales, without even the ordinary phantom-body of truth, as it is to be hoped the reader does not require to be told.

On the appointed morning, then, the quaint old church was crowded by an expectant throng. There would be no need to stretch the customary chains across the four streets that open into the church-square, for all Weimar was there already. Lucas Cranach's great altar-piece, in which Luther—limned to the life—stands and receives on his head the blood from the crucifix, would be polished up to look its best ; so, too, the monstrous tombs of Saxon nobles and other armorial non-entities. Karl August himself and Goethe were probably still in the country ; but in the grand-ducal box (for the Grand Dukes of Weimar have a private *loge* to worship in, just as our Queen at Windsor) we may imagine the pleasure-loving

dowager Amalia, and the young bride Luise, "an angel," but heroic; and Friedrich von Einsiedel, Amalia's merry chamberlain, and Count Görz, head *hofmeister* to Luise, always a true friend to Herder and a great admirer of his sermons. And probably Prince Constantine, the Duke's younger brother, a true musician, would have come over from Tiefurt, three miles down the Ilm, accompanied by his tutor Knebel, whom for the present we will call the Trelawney of Weimar. Perhaps amongst the ducal party Herder would see the exquisitely delicate and intellectual face of Charlotte von Stein, who for nearly a year already had held her Goethe in welcome chains; and Karl von Dalberg may have come from his government in Erfurt; and Wieland would be there; and Musäus, the gentle gardiner and schoolmaster, ever ready to tilt against wrong-headedness, either of sentiment or science, but loving the simple legends and fairy-tales of old. In the background loomed the dim multitude of the unknown.

According to Karoline (who, it must always be remembered, would have flayed herself alive rather than have said a bad word of her husband), the effect of this sermon was instantaneous and complete, both with the Court and amongst the townspeople; there was but one voice of heartfelt admiration; truth conquered at a blow. And to the last, the influence of Herder's sermons was very wide, and his success as a preacher undoubted. Such opposite natures as Schiller, Wieland, the Frau von Stein, Georg Müller, and Goethe, have all left us their tribute of admiration; and, what was more important, the common people seem to have liked to listen.

In the other branches of Herder's office success was more difficult; for, coming down from the independence of the pulpit, he was brought into contact with several external forces, each alive, each with a distinct personality, each with a separate conceit, fancying himself of no small account in the management of the universe. For many months he devoted himself entirely to the duties of his station; the months became years, and still every effort at usefulness seemed to fall baffled. A year after he

had come, he writes to Gleim that he could read but little, and did nothing but preach and write official documents; and as late as 1784 he complains, also to Gleim, that he is thwarted by stupid old-Saxon forms on every side, and not one of his schemes for improvement has been realised. He was required by his position to preach, to hear confession, to confirm all the children of Weimar, to baptize, marry, and bury all the "first class"; to introduce and examine the candidates for ordination, and, worst of all, to supervise all the ecclesiastical accounts of the diocese. From this last duty arose a continual stream of complaints and begging-letters from all the parsons and schoolmasters round about; and Herder, who could do little or nothing to lighten their lot, and, besides, was not cast in the correct accountant's mould, found the task inexpressibly irksome. But, for the most part, he went through it with a heroic mind; though it is no wonder that he looked with admiring envy on Goethe, who, as Herder himself said, "lived in complete calm through the most petty and even hateful bits of business, as though they were just the right thing for him"; and throughout he was inclined to admire Goethe's power in guiding the little world around him, even more than his genius of production.

But the ordinary difficulties of a parson's position were aggravated in Herder's case by his own views of his duties, and by the consequent hostility of those with whom he had to deal. Of these views we already know something, and can see, at all events, that he was not a man to be content to tread the daily round, doing only so much as decency required of him. In spirit, at least, he was a born reformer, and a reformer is generally crowned with thorns for a season. The consistory, or governing body of the Weimar diocese (answering, I suppose, nearly enough to an English "chapter"), seems to have been composed of seven members; and it struck the other six that it would be a very excellent thing for themselves and their mouldering institutions if they made a solemn league and covenant to oppose every scheme of reform that Herder laid before them. The idea, though not specially brilliant, was to

the purpose; and we can imagine with what feelings Herder would go down to the chapter-house every week—sometimes twice, or more—and dash his fervid head against that immovable blockade of sandbags. Often the contest lasted from early morning till late in the afternoon; and it is not to be expected that such a course of discipline would improve his temper, or brighten his outlook on life. As though not even a chance of contentment was to be allowed him, he was smitten at Christmas by a bilious fever (*Gallenfieber*), which was unskilfully treated, and was followed in the spring by jaundice and all the horrors of liver complaint, from which he could never entirely free himself till his life's end, in spite of frequent visits to the waters at Karlsbad, Pyrmont, and Aix. We must take account of this affliction when we come to mention the increased gloom and despondency of his later years; for, however difficult it may be to forgive a man for being sick, it seems at present too harsh and paradoxical to place sickness on the same level as moral and intellectual failings.

Here, then, was enough to make life look sombre; but there was worse behind. It seemed as though it was to be always his fate to be ground to powder between the upper millstone of what was then called Freedom and the nether millstone of pedantic orthodoxy. The widow Karoline is undoubtedly right when she tells us that at this time all the learned professions—especially the clerical—had fallen into great disrepute; comparisons were constantly made between the wretched country parsons and the soldiers or hunters, who enjoyed life in all the strength and freedom of nature, “and thereby the peaceful and studious parson was displayed in a very pitiful light. People with these views,” she goes on, “who otherwise valued Herder highly, were extremely anxious to convert him to their way of thinking, and often exerted themselves to this end by representations sometimes polite, sometimes rude.”¹ There can be no doubt that in saying this Karoline was especially thinking of Goethe during

¹ *Reminiscences*, vol. ii. p. 13.

his first years in Weimar; though, under Goethe's leadership, the Duchess Amalia, Frau von Stein, the Grand Duke, Knebel, the two Einsiedels—in fact, all to whom Herder would naturally have looked for friendship and society—followed in the same band. But Karoline has overlooked the real sadness of the situation. For, so far from needing “conversion to this way of thinking,” Herder himself had been—in Germany, at all events—its first apostle. He had preached the worthlessness of imitation and the inanity of barren learning, and in consequence he was now told that it was a disgraceful thing for a “man of genius” to be seen reading a book; he had proclaimed the full freshness of life according to Nature, and the folly of conventions, and now he was told that Nature favoured the sportsman, the play-actor, and the good skater, but was comparatively indifferent to respectable behaviour and the marriage-laws, which, together with other morality, a “man of genius” might regard as foolish conventions. Here, again, we see how true it is that a man is the slave of his own productions. But, worse than all, Herder, having lagged behind the current of the stream of thought to which he himself had given the first impulse—having, indeed, followed of late a completely different channel—was as one who has lost caste in the eyes of his fellows, or, at best, is contemptuously pitied where once he was leader and king. As a parallel, we may think of Wordsworth, when the young Titans went on their way to the conquest of the future with but a passing regret, “thus having been that he should cease to be,”¹ and that—

He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,
He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves.²

But it must not be thought that Herder, therefore, shut himself from his kind. When he was not occupied with the cares of office he was glad to take part, though apparently only as spectator, in the concerts and plays and open-air festivities

¹ Shelley's *Lines to Wordsworth*.

² *The Lost Leader*, by Browning.

which, under Goethe's guidance, quickly succeeded each other in honour of the young Duke and Duchess. Goethe now and again mentions him in his letters to Charlotte von Stein as forming one of the company in some expedition to Dornburg, Jena, or lovely little Tiefurt, where the woodland stage was built. But his greatest delight was to attend the little gatherings, which in her more intellectual moods the Duchess Amalia would collect, either in her house at Weimar or more generally in the Ettersburg on the thickly-wooded hill. Here the afternoons or evenings would be spent in music, or discussions on art, literature, and politics; or some one would recite passages from Shakespeare, Goethe, Lessing, Wieland, and Herder himself. During these earlier years in Weimar, too, he used to ride a great deal; and one hard gallop from distant Gotha seems to have become a fable of prowess. The month after he arrived he visited Kochberg, the country estate of the Frau von Stein; and there, for the first time, he met the poet Lenz, who returned for a space to Weimar, but had to take his departure soon afterwards on account of some lampoon or other piece of folly (always spoken of by Goethe as an *Eselei*) which he aimed at Goethe and perhaps higher personages.

Of Goethe himself, as has been said, Herder saw comparatively little for the first four or five years. Their lives seemed to be running on different lines, though we can now see that the lines were gradually converging. The practical duties of each lay in quite distinct spheres, and the rest of Goethe's time was occupied by Charlotte von Stein, Karl August, and the management of the plays and other social entertainments, generally wild enough. Besides he was very often away from Weimar, at Ilmenau, Jena, Erfurt, or in the retirement of the Wartburg. The year after Herder's arrival he accomplished the celebrated journey through the Harz in winter; next year he was in Berlin; and in the autumn of 1779 he started for Switzerland with the Grand Duke, and was away the whole winter. As to Wieland, I have not been able to discover that there was any particular cause for his comparison of Herder to

an electric cloud, though it is graphic enough, as Wieland's comparisons always are; but it is certain that there could not have been any real sympathy between the two; and in 1781 the potential electricity blazed out into actual lightning on the occasion of some dispute at an evening party.

Even in Weimar, then, it was found that a crowd was not company, and that such faces as Goethe's and Wieland's were but a gallery of pictures where there was no love. In his letters Herder continually complains of worry and loneliness of spirit; to Hamann he even writes that he had never in his life been so much alone as during the winter of 1777-8, and on the whole he is inclined to think himself worse off in this respect than at Bückeburg. Being thrown back upon himself he turned once more to the joy of his life-work and the calm pleasures of his home. In January 1778 Karoline gave birth to what Herder called "the third volume of her works"; the other five volumes appeared in tolerably regular succession, and all seem to have been very excellent works after their kind, though one had only a short circulation.¹ But before we proceed to consider Herder's own works, and to give some details of his ordinary life, we must take account of a strange person who now first appears, and was to exercise considerable influence on his future aspect of the world.

August von Einsiedel was one of a large family of brothers,

¹ Here is the full catalogue :

1774. Aug. 28. Wilhelm Christian Gottfried, a doctor, died in Weimar, 1806.

1776. Aug. 18. Sigmund August Wolfgang, inspector of mines, died in Dresden, 1838.

1778. Jan. ... Ludwig Wilhelm Ernst, said by Georg Müller to be the least intellectual of all the children and most unlike Herder. He became a merchant.

1779. Aug. ... Karl Aemil Adelbert, became a farmer.

1781. April. ... Luise Theodore Emilie, married Herr von Stichling of Weimar.

1783. June. ... Emil Ernst Gottfried, became a forester or ranger; edited his father's *Nachlass*; died 1855.

1787. Dec. ... Karl Ferdinand Alfred, died April 1788.

1790. Aug. 21. Rinaldo, became a forester.

none of whom were content to go through life by the ordinary plodding route. The wild hedonism of his brother Friedrich Hildebrand is tolerably familiar to students of Goethe's life, but he had by no means so interesting and complex a character as August. After leaving his native Lumpsig August had entered the army, but, finding that course of life altogether too oppressive and unintelligent for a freeborn man, he quitted it in disgust, and came to see his brother in Weimar, where he seems to have stayed through the winter of 1777-8. He met Herder at Tiefurt, and the two were at once attracted to each other. He often came to see the Herders in the evenings; and Karoline tells us they would then sit up half the night holding converse and smoking their pipes. From his letters, which begin in the June following, it is evident that Einsiedel was already a man of wide and peculiar knowledge. For the present his attention was chiefly directed to the misty dynasties of antiquity, especially the Chaldæan and Egyptian, though he was an enthusiastic inquirer into the history and customs of all unsophisticated and primitive races—modern as well as ancient. In these days he would probably have devoted himself to the study of sociology, according to the scientific method; and he might have done some good work in that line, for his mind was eminently scientific. And indeed chemistry, as far as it then existed, and geology, became more and more his favourite pursuits, and he was anxious to make himself acquainted with all the important conclusions of anatomy and physiology.

“He had not a trace of imagination,” Karoline continues; “and his only aim was to obtain what he called ‘definite and true ideas.’”¹ Still she thought him on the whole “the kindest and most good-tempered man in the world.” He hated quackery above all things, especially quackery in science; but he could never be induced to publish a word of his own patient investigations, partly because “he found it too tedious to write a book,” partly because he would not expose himself to the criticism of

¹ *Reminiscences*, vol. ii. pp. 8, 9.

“a pack of wretched reviewers”; though he tells Herder that he had given the paper-makers plenty of employment by his copious notes. The life of the world, politics, literature—he regarded all with equal suspicion and contempt. An idealist fallen on heavy times, he knew not the meaning of compromise; and found to his sorrow, as time went on, that the universe was not created for the individual, and that his hand did not keep the stars in their courses. Then cried he in his wrath, “All men are liars. Vanity of vanities. There is nothing new and nothing true, and it doesn’t matter.”¹ In vain did Herder in 1780 urge him to make peace with the universal destiny, to submit himself to the yoke, and not for ever to kick against the pricks, since in the end of such policy the loss and pain were all on one side; whereupon Einsiedel pleasantly but firmly replied, that it was all very well for respectable citizens with assured position—like Herder for example—to submit to the yoke, but to a free-born, unlimited Einsiedel it was a very different matter. “Of all foolish things in the world,” he goes on, “the most foolish is that one man does a thing because another wants him to.” How much better to enjoy the glorious independence of Einsiedel, whose greatest happiness is to do nothing, “for all motives of action are in my opinion ridiculous.” “For all our activities come to the same thing in the end; we only change the appearance of things, without making them better or worse. We are all served like the priest John, who lost behind what he gained in front; for he cut off a bit of cloth for himself at the Emperor’s election, and then found that some one else had cut a bit out of his own cloak. Goethe’s *Pater Brey* is by far my favourite of all theories of morality and cosmopolitan schemes since Enoch’s prophecy. You get no real pleasure from activity; the Godhead does nothing at all, and it’s my opinion the reason is because he is very well off already Your eremites, the theosophs of Asia, who have far more penetration than our

¹ So, too, Emerson’s “languid young Oxford friend,” a very inferior being to Einsiedel.

philosophers, who consider activity the function of man, *they* all say that absorption into inactivity is union with the Godhead, the heritage of good men, their being's end and aim." And again he writes: "What would you have me do with myself? I have no interest in life at all. The view of the Preacher is the best view of life, and it is the view I take as mine;" and so on in language long painfully familiar to us all.¹

For the sake of clearness we may as well here sketch the course of his life as far as it concerned Herder, though we shall have to anticipate a little. After waiting for his discharge from the army at Lumpsig, where the ignorance of his parents seems to have driven him to despair, he returned to Weimar on his way to Göttingen, and perhaps spent the whole of the winter there. On reaching Göttingen he soon found that it was not the place for a free-born man with ideas of his own. "Nothing here," he writes, "but cold philosophy scraped together out of library catalogues. A few months ago I saw Schlözer" (Herder's old opponent), "whom every one worships here. Never in my life have I come across so odious (*fatal*) a countenance, though I have travelled a good deal and mixed with the crowd at the Frankfurt fair. . . . I am sick of these men and this old story, and indeed of all the pushing and pulling along the path of this world, and I have determined to take up my pilgrim's staff and go wandering over the world till I find a nation and climate to suit me; and that certainly will not be in our wretched civilised countries, but where mankind still lives free from prejudice and system, willing neither to rule nor to be slaves." He seems to have intended to make his way through Egypt and settle in Æthiopia, which he imagined was just the place for a free and peaceful life. "The one and only difficulty would be the language"; and as soon as that was mastered he could sit under the palm-trees and dream his life away, the best and wisest amongst his ebony brothers. But for the present the scheme was out of his reach, and in 1780 he passed through

¹ Einsiedel's letters to Herder are printed in Herder's Correspondence (*Von und an Herder*), at the end of vol. ii.

Weimar again on his way to Freiberg, not far to the south-west of Dresden, to superintend some mines in company with the famous geologist Werner. But even this proved a sphere far too limited for the high-souled man; all the methods were antiquated, and all the teachers shams; the use and wont of the place was petty and conventional. If each of us could but have given a word or two of advice on the creation of the universe, how much better it would all have been. But on the whole he contrived to keep his temper by avoiding his irritating fellows. "I take no notice of any one," he writes; "and indeed there is not a soul worth associating with."

From Freiberg he generally came to Weimar in the summer as well as at Christmas, and spent much of his time with the Herders. It is significant that Herder, who was too often accused of bitterness and sarcasm, was never known to say a harsh or bitter thing to Einsiedel, the man who was more opposed to many of his dearest opinions than any of his other friends. It was during this period that Herder tried to persuade him to accommodate his neck to the yoke of life; but the old love of Freedom was not dead; and in 1785, apparently in the pay of the French Government, he started with two of his brothers to explore North Africa. He passed through Weimar on his way, and proceeded through Marseilles to Tunis, where the party stayed six or eight months, feasting in charming freedom with the Bey, visiting the ruins of Old Carthage, and witnessing the bombardment of Tunis by the Venetian fleet. But beyond Tunis they were unable to advance, partly because the plague was raging in the country between them and Senegal, partly because a party less suited for exploration never started to explore; partly also because their numbers were unexpectedly increased either soon after they arrived or before they had left France. For during these years there had been dwelling in Weimar a lady of high position, the wedded wife of the Chamberlain, von Werther-Beichlingen, Lord of Frohndorf. In the Weimar circle she seems to have been generally known as one of the chief of court beauties. Fair she was for certain, but not so fair

as fickle; for, in spite of many experiments, she had found more difficulty than most women in discovering her ideal of manly excellence. Time after time she had been disappointed by man's short-comings, for the individual man is but a limited creature; and time after time her fancy fell a-turning. She was very intimate with the Herders and a special friend of Karoline, if we may judge from a letter in after-years, in which she describes how she used to come and play with the children; and it may have been in Herder's house that she lighted upon Einsiedel, and hastened to conclude that here at length was the consummation she had sought with tears and laughter. But he was going to Africa, and what were life in Weimar then? In the region of the romantic Africa was the absolute: how sweet to dream away the sunny days stretched side by side beneath the slender palms—a Paul and Virginie till life's last breath.¹ Determined to follow at whatever risk, during her husband's absence she caused the rumour to be spread that she had died suddenly; and, after she had escaped unnoticed from Weimar, an image or doll made in her likeness was solemnly buried in her stead. The idea was undeniably quaint, and we cannot refuse admiration to the lady's skill; but she was detected by a friend at Strassburg; and when we watch the husband standing by the newly-made grave, whilst the coffin was dug out and the image disclosed, it is hard to balance the tragedy and comedy of the situation.

Here then was reason enough why the exploring party could not be as successful as had been hoped; for a court beauty is not the companion one would choose in an attempt to penetrate into the wilds of Africa. The lovers came slowly back to Germany through Italy and the South of France; and, after some negociation with her brothers and husband, the lady was divorced, and two years afterwards married to Einsiedel in a very commonplace and disappointing style. Goethe in a letter to Charlotte von Stein says, as commentary on the business: "But for our runaways, what a horrible end! To die, to go to

¹ It was only three or four years after the lady's flight that Bernardin St. Pierre moved all the tender hearts of Europe with his gentle tale.

Africa, to begin the strangest romance, and then to get a divorce, and be married in the commonest fashion! I have been very merry over it. In this workaday world nothing out of the ordinary course is allowed to be brought about." After this the Herders appear to have had no great intercourse with Einsiedel for some years, though he wrote to Herder about some appointment which he hoped in his lordly way to obtain in the Berlin Academy; but Herder was forced to reply that he had not the slightest claim to show. About the same time Forster, Heyne's son-in-law, was setting out to explore part of Russia by command of Katherine II.; and Herder, at Karoline's suggestion, hinted that Einsiedel would be a useful man for his knowledge of chemistry and geology. But Forster replied that this was not the knowledge required, and Herder, who had some reasonable doubts as to the wisdom of his proposal, let the matter drop. After living some years in Lumpsig the Einsiedels removed to Ilmenau, where they were probably occupied with the mines in which Goethe took such interest; and Knebel, who was then living at Ilmenau, mentions them in his letters with pleasure, though he was much annoyed by "that enthusiastic fool of a woman." She, poor lady, had found that her romance did not long survive her wedding, and that the man for whom she had died and been buried by proxy was beginning to regard her beautiful flightiness as an annoyance to a calm and scientific mind. At length he seems to have handed her over together with her son to the keeping of his younger brother. He met Herder at Jena in 1794, and perhaps once or twice again; and his letters continue up to 1801, latterly for the most part on the great doings in France, in which he was so much interested that he appears even to have undertaken a journey to Paris, though he was always proudly conscious that he could have managed the affair far better than all these Mirabeaus, and Dantons, and Napoleons.

On the whole we must regard this Einsiedel as one of those men whose powers are lost to the world for want of a great leading principle in life. He had no all-absorbing passion to

which he might have sacrificed his pride, his comfort, reputation, all he loved, even life itself, and thought the world well lost; he was never lifted out of himself, but always kept an eye on the opinion of other men and took account of reviewers. Therefore, clear-sighted and intellectual as he was, he remained a dilettante to whom the pains and blessedness of artist were unknown. For the complete sceptic is, in practice, identical with the vulgar fatalist, and both are as dead as mummies as far as production goes.

And yet I am inclined to lay great stress on this man's influence over Herder during 1777 and the next three or four years; for, though the direct evidence is slight, I believe it was through the scientific mind of Einsiedel that Herder passed from Lavater to Goethe. Even in the publications up to 1780 we begin to see a change, partly due, no doubt, to increased knowledge of Spinoza—partly to the healthier tone of Weimar and the sharp contact with practical life—but chiefly, I imagine, to the long conversations with Einsiedel.

X In 1778 Herder published the first part of the *Popular Songs and Ballads*, and a translation and commentary on the *Songs of Solomon*, adding examples of the use to which these poems were put by the early German *Minnesinger*. He also rewrote his essay on *Apprehension and Sensation*, for his German spirit would not let him rest till he had attacked the eternal question of the *Ego*, and he published it together with the treatise on *Plastik Art*, that had been so long forming in his mind. In the same year he obtained the prize from the Munich Academy for an essay on the *Influence of Poetry on the People*. In 1779 he published the second part of the *Ballads*, and his Commentary on the Revelation of St. John. It is evident at first sight that in these works he was only fulfilling schemes that had long been on his mind; but it is significant that, amongst these six, only one is strictly theological, and this one seems to have been the cause of his final rupture with Lavater. And yet so little change of position did Herder himself see in his *Maran Atha, or the Coming of the Lord*, that he dated his published version 1775:

The interpretation of this curious poem of the Revelation evidently caused Herder much perplexity. Guided by his infallible canon of criticism, that we must take our stand by the poet's side, and see what the world looked like to his eyes, he could not escape the conclusion that the author of the Revelation wrote for those around him, and expected the coming of Christ very soon after the destruction of Jerusalem. But in that case not only had the prophecy been false, but the book had ceased to have any living interest for the present time. Herder mentioned his difficulty to Lavater, who adroitly replied, that "the telescope of prophecy brings all things near"; in other words, that to the inspired eye time vanishes. But this solution failed to solve, and Herder's book remains a curious instance of almost wilful inconsistency and self-contradiction. Georg Müller tells us that its appearing caused much scandal to the pious, though Herder had attempted to guard himself against misconstruction, and even wrote one of his *Letters on the Study of Theology* on purpose to allay their fears. In December 1780 Lavater wrote that he was "oppressed and wounded" by the tone of the work, and with this letter his correspondence with Herder comes to an end, and we must suppose that his influence on Herder's thought ended likewise.

Lavater's admiration for Herder was undoubtedly sincere. In his *Physiognomy* he describes him, after his wild fashion, as "a genius striving, high-flying, wide-glancing, embracing, constant, almighty, full of creative and destructive strength; like his works, a pyramid at which mice gnaw in vain and insects break their heads." This figure of a pyramid, with the mice and the insects complete, stands on the title-page of the third volume. The motto for the whole work is a quotation from Herder's *Urkunde*, and the description of Frederick the Great is taken from *Another Philosophy of History*. In October 1800, when he was slowly dying of his wound, Lavater wrote the following "Memorial, to be sent to Herder in Weimar after my death":—

Nothing in mortal man is more immortal than love. Though it sleep

for years together it awakes to truest life if it is touched by the finger of the man who first implanted it in our heart.

He died on the 2nd of January, in the following year. We shall see him once in Weimar, but he has ceased to be of importance to us.

In October 1779 Herder writes to Hartknoch that this *Maran Atha* was his masterpiece, and probably the end of his life as author; but it was far from being either. In the year after he gained another prize from the Berlin Academy, and the next year from the Academy of Munich. During this period he was also engaged on a series of letters on the Study of Theology, for he had found of late years that the candidates for ordination had been much perturbed in mind—for good reasons. It was owing to this almost universal perturbation that Herder's path was crossed by a young man whose friendship was of much value and comfort both to himself and Karoline during the years that were coming. The Herders had spent the June of 1780 amid the forest-hills of Ilmenau; and on the return home, the first part of the *Theological Letters* being finished, Herder's whole time was given up to his practical duties in Weimar.

But early in October travellers between Thuringia and Göttingen must have stared with some surprise at a melancholic youth of twenty, dressed in "a round black hat, white '*Charles-doux*' (*Schahl-tuch*? scarf or muffler), a good cloth coat, black breeches, white stockings, and new half-shoes," tramping through rain and mire along the heavy autumn roads, sorely perplexed by the devious way and the speech that was strange to his southern ears; tormented, too, by dreams within and omens without, but cheering his heart by the songs of David or Klopstock, and the bright hope of what lay before him; for the desire of years was being fulfilled, and at last, having shaken off the dust of Göttingen, he was on his way to Herder, the well-spring of life. This is that Georg Müller whom I have occasionally mentioned before.

He was born near Schaffhausen, and from birth had been endowed with that sombre melancholy and inclination to the

terrific and supernatural which is characteristic of the merry Swiss boy. When about eighteen he had gone to Zurich and was received into the enthusiastic circle which centred round Lavater and Pfenniger. They about now must have been spending much of their time seated at a mountain's foot trying to remove it by an act of faith; but, as their faith could never attain to the purity of a grain of mustard-seed, the mountain still remains. Müller's chief patron seems to have been Häfely, a preacher in the town and a disciple of Lavater. After being in Zurich about a year he was sent to Göttingen, probably by the advice of his elder brother, Johann, the great historian of Switzerland, who was already a professor at Cassel. But the change from Lavater to Michaëlis, who was removing other mountains, and not by faith alone, was too sharp for the earnest young mind; he was chilled to the heart, and wandered about disconsolate and plaintive as a lost dog. In vain did he stand for a whole hour, sunk in wonder, before a cast of Apollo; beauty could do little for him. But long ago, in Switzerland, he had read Herder's *Urkunde*, and had fancied he found therein the final explanation. He had then determined to see Herder, if it were possible, and now he packed his little bundle and trudged boldly forth from dreary Göttingen, for the opportunity was come.

In a series of letters to Häfely he sent an account of the course of each day as it fell out, entering into the last detail of domesticity, to the scandal of all stern historians. Some years after, in an autobiography which he made for the benefit of his betrothed, he again sketched the story of his intercourse with the Herder family in more general terms, chiefly relating to his second visit, when he lived in Herder's house from September 1781 till March 1782. His first visit to Weimar only lasted a week, and two nights of this were spent at the Elephant inn, which he compares to the interior of Jonah's whale for discomfort, for he was of a rather irritable and exacting temperament. The accounts of these two visits form by far the most vivid picture of Herder in his daily life, and for our sketch

it will be sufficient to take them both together and select the details that seem characteristic, supplementing them occasionally from Karoline's *Reminiscences*.

Müller gives an exact account of the house; the front door painted bright blue, where his heart trembled with fear and expectancy; the reception room, hung with engravings, where Herder himself came to greet him, with face "smiling like the dawn in spring," proving at a glance the futility of all portraiture; the libraries and pleasant rooms with their sofas and writing-tables; portraits, too, of Winckelmann, Swift, Hartknoch, Fuseli, and old Hamann in the place of honour; and then the bust of Minerva in black marble, a gift from the young Duchess, envied of Goethe himself; and the study painted blue, like the front door, but very dark from the shadow of the church; and, guiding all, the figure of the wife—"a noble, warm-hearted angel, gliding about, so light and soft, so gentle, so kind and lovely, so tender and true and trustful." Karoline, on her side, was equally charmed by the retiring but enthusiastic youth; "he is pure as a flower and stedfast as a man," she writes to Gleim; and, finding how much his presence cheered her husband, she was always regretting in darker years that Müller could not return to live with them, for then her husband would surely recover.

The day was divided in the ordinary German fashion, and each day of the week had its special routine. The family rose early, and there was a slight breakfast with milk or coffee before Herder set about the duties of his office, received the complaints and petitions from the clergy of the diocese, arranged the accounts, and wrote his official letters. Tuesday morning was always spent with the consistory, and too often he returned from the conflict depressed and gloomy. Thursday and Friday were his easiest days, and then he would work at his books or read Milton with Müller, and sometimes walk with him in the country. But even these free mornings were generally interrupted by business, and Karoline tells us he never had a day entirely to himself; and yet his works number forty-three

volumes of considerable size, which proves his activity, even if we judge by quantity alone. Provided that business allowed, dinner followed at twelve o'clock, consisting of the ordinary German courses,¹ for Herder was absolutely indifferent to all delicacies and the details of cookery, "which," Karoline adds, "was a great comfort to me," for in her hands the management of the whole household lay. After dinner Herder would play for a time with the children, whose great object was to induce him to descend to their level, and creep about with them on the floor as bear, or other monster of delight and terror; whereupon "such a shouting would arise" as was very trying to the nerves of the pensive young man, who, whenever the children wailed, which was perhaps inevitable, "wished himself a thousand miles away, and was like to have jumped out of his skin or to have dashed everything in pieces."² From this he was fortunately restrained by politeness, and, on the whole, he bore his trial well, being even delighted by a species of miracle play very popular with the children, who were endowed with a dramatic instinct certainly not inherited from their father. "Once they played the Resurrection of Christ. *Herr Christus* (probably Gottfried) lay under a bench, and the Angel (August) pulled him out by one foot; or they enacted Adam and Eve and the story of the Temptation, and a thousand other excellent scenes," in none of which the religious Müller found anything to shock his piety.

Herder was very careful in the education of these children, and even wrote a book of instructions for private tutors and governesses; but he sent his children to the gymnasium or public school as soon as possible, for he was strongly opposed to all seclusion and private instruction, well knowing that a child's best education is derived from its fellows, and the only real knowledge is that which cometh out of a man; for, as Goethe

¹ For instance: "Egg-soup, turnips, roast meat, cold meat, carp, wine, grapes and nuts," says the minute observer Müller on the first day of his visit.

² Müller's accounts of his visits to Herder were published in 1881 in a little book called *Aus dem Herderschen Hause*.

has somewhere said, we learn a thing soon, but are slow to discover its truth.¹ Herder also laid great stress on bodily culture, and encouraged his children to climb the highest trees, and enjoy all the other forms of exercise that are within the reach of the German youth. The children having retired, coffee was brought, and Herder smoked half a pipe,² a practice which he had adopted, since his arrival in Weimar, for the relief of headaches, probably by advice of Knebel, who was supposed never to let his pipe grow cold. He would then sometimes play the harpsichord or piano, to please his guest, and sing perhaps besides; and Müller writes that he had never heard music to compare to this for pathos and simple grandeur.

Herder's love for music never declined; a beautiful song or a fine chorus never failed to banish his cares, and gladly would he hear and gladly join in a part. Handel, Mozart, and Gluck became his chief favourites, especially in their Church music, though one of his chief delights was to hear his sons—Gottfried and Emil—play the *Seven Words* of Haydn. He had hoped to do much for religion by introducing true music into the services in his church; but here, as in so many of his reforms, he was hampered by his colleagues, and also by the rising importance of the theatre, which drew away all the best voices for the performance of operas. Still, seated in his study, which was close to the church, he would listen to the practising, and could never continue his reading or work till the music was ended. He was never absent at the production of a good opera, and generally attended the concerts given by the Grand Duke on Sunday evenings. The Sunday before Müller left Weimar, in March 1782, Handel's *Messiah* was performed at one of these concerts,³ and Herder himself had written a translation of the words to fit

¹ In the *Italian Journey*.

² "And made face enough over it" (*ein sehr suffisantes Mündchen*), says Müller; or does *suffisantes* mean "complacent" here?

³ According to Frau von Stein's son it was "often" performed in Weimar as early as 1780. This is an instance of the enterprise of the Weimar Court, for the *Messiah* was not performed in Berlin till 1786—nor in Leipzig for some months later—and then against the advice of all the so-called musicians.

the music. I have found no mention of Beethoven in Herder's works, and, indeed, his music was probably hardly known so far as Weimar at the time of Herder's death.

The rest of the afternoon was divided between work and exercise. When he was alone Herder's favourite walk was to a thickly-wooded hill, probably just across the Ilm, on the upper road to Tiefurt. With Müller, or in later years with Jean Paul, he would drive up the long slope to the beech-woods of the Ettersberg, and on to the retired castle, scene of so many revels; or they would follow the Ilm on its way to Tiefurt, where Knebel had designed the park, not of such beauty, Müller thought, as Goethe's park in Weimar. Of Goethe himself Müller makes little mention; he was evidently rather frightened, and, being cursed with self-consciousness, was inclined to wonder what this man of strange renown might think of him, which after all was completely unimportant. Once, it is true, on his first visit, he passed the black ruins of the old castle, and, crossing the bridge, walked down the new avenue, now called the *Stern*, and through the broad and sunny meadow to the little white house with pointed roof that stands at the foot of the low hill to the left; and Goethe, in his famous blue coat trimmed with gold, came to greet him, and talked of Switzerland and Lavater, and his old friend Passivant. But he was summoned away almost immediately, and the two never became intimate; intimacy was, indeed, impossible. With Wieland Müller fared still worse; he seems to have been prejudiced, probably considering his works immoral and flippant; he thought the man himself, at all events, frightfully ugly and contemptibly vain, and saw as little of him and his family as possible. After his first visit Müller said to Herder (for one must say something), "Wieland seems to be a very good man." Whereupon "the electric cloud" gave reply, "There is none good but God"; and the conversation ended.

After his walk Herder generally set to work again till supper-time. After supper sometimes one of the party would

read aloud from some poet,¹ or any recent work of interest. Karoline says that she used to read all his manuscripts aloud to him, that he might judge of the sound; but more often the hours up to twelve or one o'clock were spent in conversation. Once, whilst Müller was there, the criticism turned on Lessing's *Nathan*, which had lately appeared, partly under stress of poverty;² at another time Herder was indignant against "the un-Christian and devilish trafficking with truth, out of which so many authors made profit." Of his own dealings with the publishers he never spoke; but he seems often to have said that as soon as one of his own books was printed, and had lost the confidential look of manuscript, he hated the sight of it. Generally, Weber, the preacher to the *Stift*, or foundation school, would look in during the evening, and Herder would smoke another "half-pipe" with him. He took no stimulants except a little wine in the middle of the day, and coffee; tea was too exciting; "and," adds his widow, "he did not require champagne and that sort of thing to stimulate his intellect," which is possibly a sneer at poor Schiller, whom our Electra found it hard to forgive, even in his grave. Sometimes high ladies from the court, probably the Duchess Luise and Charlotte von Stein among others, would visit the quiet parsonage, and would even discuss metaphysics³ with Herder, with an acuteness that fairly astounded young Müller, who, for his part—being, as I say, cursed with self-consciousness—considered himself "too shy for society, and was sure to say something stupid if he said any thing at all."

¹ "Karoline read (from Götz), and Herder sitting near her on the sofa gradually began to snore slightly," says the careful Müller,—for the flesh is weak, and Götz, too probably, dull.

² Late in this year (1780), or early in the next, Gleim writes that Lessing had visited him with Friedrich Jacobi, but had seemed dull and had fallen asleep at dinner. That clearest of minds was growing dim, and early in February 1781 he fell into a deeper sleep. The gods were beginning to go.

³ "Sir," said Johnson, "a woman's preaching is like a dog's walking on his hind legs. It is not done well, but you are surprised it should be done at all."

But the main subjects of conversation, especially at night, seem to have been stories of ghosts and dreams and forebodings, of all things in the world—stories, to judge from the “well-authenticated” examples quoted by Müller, that would hardly impose on a child in these days, but were enough to send the young man quaking off to bed with hair on end, like quills upon the fretful porcupine; and they were firmly believed, by Karoline at least, as almost religious tenets of faith. It is not worth while to reveal the folly of these supposed omens and prophetic dreams; indeed, we must respect the hope of Müller that his work will not fall into the hands of the scoffer. But it gives us an interesting glance down the dim aisles of history to think that a hundred years ago a man like Herder was still haunted by a half-belief in the absurdities of second sight, forebodings, and spiritual visitants to the glimpses of the moon; for the light of science as yet had hardly risen, and in the twilight many uncouth monsters, such as Cagliostro (born the year before Herder), Gall, Mesmer, and Lavater himself, were fluttering abroad and perplexing the hearts of men, leading the very elect astray by their abominable superstitions, that have now become a sport for servant-girls and hysterical people of idleness. In after-years Herder astonished Jean Paul by telling him he wished he could see a ghost (and, indeed, this would be a great comfort to most of us, even now); and to Müller he said, that of all spirits he should like to see Christ or St. John, and Moses and Brutus. “Of Christ he would ask only one question, but of that he would tell no man.” If we put ourselves back a hundred years, and become Herder for a moment, we shall have no difficulty in imagining a question which might lead to the solution of much that seemed perplexing; we shall also cease to wonder that the young Swiss found enough that was impressive, and even terrific, in the converse of that small circle, drawn close round the stove in the nights of winter.

On Sunday, probably after morning service, Herder held a class for candidates for ordination, with whom he discussed “the sciences, and other branches of knowledge which might

conduce to higher views of theology." One of his assistant preachers in the church was Schröter, who had some knowledge of geology, and had written a good deal on minerals, but, according to Müller, "preached common-place orthodoxy, like every one else in Weimar." On Sunday evenings there was tea in the Herders' house for any one who chose to come; but in later years this was discontinued, "because," says Karoline, "some one always chose to come whom Herder did not choose to see." It appears that after his death a satirical and wounding account of these social gatherings was printed in a Weimar paper, much to the indignation of the widow. As to Herder's manner in conversation, Müller tells us that he contradicted people with so pleasant a smile it was impossible to take offence; and, according to Karoline, his usual tone in society was an easy irony, which he found it necessary to discontinue as he grew older, because it was incomprehensible to "the heavy Germanity of the Germans," and led to continual mistakes and annoyances; indeed, we too often find that his friends were not so modest as young Müller, but objected to contradiction, even with so pleasant a smile.

During the winter which Georg Müller spent with the Herders his famous brother Johann came over from Cassel to stay with them for a few days. But in March Georg himself had to go, and took leave of his friends amid copious tears: "I wept at every word that was said" for the whole day before. Under his master's influence life had again become possible to him. As his brother Johann said: "Herder brought Georg to the mean between the heat of Zurich and the cold of Göttingen." To Göttingen he would not return, but went home to his native Schaffhausen, where in 1794 he became Professor of Greek and Hebrew, and in 1804 "Professor of the Encyclopædia and Methodology of all the Sciences," which I suppose to be the nearest actual approach to the "professor of things in general." In the troubles of the time he also found himself translated into a statesman. He never saw the Herders again in spite of repeated wishes, but the letters between them must have been

very numerous, though these unhappily for us still lie unpublished in the limbo of the Schaffhausen library. On Herder's death Georg Müller, together with his brother and Heyne, assisted too by Karoline and her eldest son Gottfried, issued a complete edition of his works, adding two volumes of *Reminiscences*, collected and put together by Karoline with the help of the others. Johann von Müller himself wished to be Herder's biographer, but was interrupted by the European upheavals of 1805, and by death in 1809. Karoline died a few months afterwards, and Georg was left to superintend the edition. His task was finished in 1819; in October he wrote the preface to the *Reminiscences*, and four weeks afterwards he died "with the image of Herder before his eyes as in a trance."

We must now turn from these domestic scenes to the wider interests of the world which—for Herder, as for every one—began across the threshold. In 1780 he had entered into a correspondence with Eichhorn, Oriental professor in Jena, a young man of wide learning, inspired by the idea of human development, which drove him to write a continuous history of the arts and sciences of Europe. Beyond the region of learning Herder's letters generally serve as introductions or recommendations on behalf of needy and deserving young men who had appealed to him for aid. For it seems that every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto Herder till he became a kind of refuge for Adullamites. As far as his power went he spared no pains in hope to cheer them on their way. For one young poet, Mniöch, who had fled from Frederick's soldiery in Königsberg, he collected money and maintained him at Jena, till he came under the fatherly protection of benevolent old Gleim. Herder's practical sympathy with the young never flagged, even when the current of young thought had swept past him out of sight and left him wondering and ill at ease.

Already he felt himself growing old, and a severe illness in the spring of 1781 made him partially bald. "The brook of my life," he writes next year, "is often dull and mournful."

His health gradually grew worse, and he began to be tormented with physical hypochondria. "I am becoming an elderly God," he plaintively writes at the age of forty; and every one who has grown old in mind or even in body will know from what a depth of suffering and regret those words must have come. And yet I should choose the four or five years from 1783 onwards as by far the best and greatest, and therefore in a sense the happiest, of his life. In 1782 he published the first part of his treatise on *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, and the second part in the next year. In the spring of this year he at length found time for a long-promised visit to Gleim in Halberstadt. He took his eldest son Gottfried with him; and after a few days with Gleim he went on to Brunswick, where he was welcomed by Jerusalem with such kindness that he "felt quite ashamed of himself," no doubt on account of his impatience with the poor old man some years before. The travellers next proceeded northwards to Hamburg, with its reminiscences of Lessing and youthful days thirteen years before. Here he at last met the poet of the *Messias*, and was received with joy, though real friendship with the worthy old man was probably out of the question; and the real cause of the visit to Hamburg was that Claudius had returned to his beloved Wandsbeck, which lies only three miles to the north, and was now superintendent of accounts for a bank in Altona. By June Herder had returned to Weimar and to Goethe.

For ever since 1780 the paths of Herder and Goethe had been gradually converging, though too often they seemed to swerve aside for a time through some harsh criticism or bitter word, sometimes from Karoline, sometimes from Herder, for the difficulties of whose position Goethe perhaps did not make sufficient allowance. It was evident that Herder could no longer be master, for Goethe was now over thirty, and at that age a few years more gives a man no necessary advantage; and, with the journey through Switzerland in 1779, Goethe had entered upon a period of self-contained and steadfast manhood. His short notes to Herder begin again in the next year, and

steadily increase in number. In 1782 he introduced several of Herder's ballads in the woodland drama called the *Fisher's Daughter*, which begins with the *Erkönig*, and was acted on the banks of the Ilm at Tiefurt. A few months after Herder's return from Hamburg, Goethe wrote to Friedrich Jacobi that one of the greatest joys of his life was that the painful clouds which had so long separated him from Herder had at length rolled away, and, as he was convinced, for ever. Throughout these years Goethe was living for the most part a retired and even life—occupied with bones, and stones, and plants, and schemes for the new park and palace; he was also working at *Egmont*, the prose *Iphigenie*, and, above all, *Wilhelm Meister*, parts of which he sent from time to time to Herder, "to be read by the fire with tea, that it may be more homely." In a letter, also to Jacobi, he sums up his life in this sentence: "I am still devoted to my old fate, and suffer where others enjoy, and enjoy where others suffer." During the autumn and winter of 1783 Herder began to write his *Ideen*, and read it aloud to Goethe, who received it with enthusiastic pleasure, and in a letter from Rome some years afterwards called it "his dearest Evangel." The two were together almost every evening, reading or discussing science, or working at the microscope. "Goethe visits me diligently, and is as refreshing as balm," Herder writes. It was to Herder that Goethe first announced his joyful discovery of the *os intermaxillare* in man, March 1784; and he could hardly be induced to leave Weimar at all, "so good and kind had Herder become." He considered him "the only capital that paid interest except Charlotte von Stein," who was generally present when the Herders came to tea in the Gartenhaus; and during this same year he writes to her, "except you, Knebel, and Herder, I have no public."

Yet there was only too much fear that he would be deprived of his new-found friend just at the height of intimacy. For Göttingen, anxious to retrieve her mistake of eight years before, was urgent with invitations to Herder; and, though to Karoline the word Göttingen "sounded like Sodom and Gomorrha," a

struggle of eight years against a barrier of sandbags tries a man's temper, and her husband was really anxious to leave Weimar. At the same time Gleim was scheming to obtain him an appointment at Klosterberg, on the banks of the Elbe, but these proposals came to nothing for one cause or another; and two years later an offer from Hamburg and high expectations of office in Berlin—when the great Frederick, to use Gleim's phrase, "had ceased to be mortal"—were equally futile, and Herder remained in Weimar. Whereat Goethe was glad for his own sake. "I should lose much if he went," he says in another letter to Charlotte, "for, but for you and him, I am alone here." The fruits of this renewal of friendship were soon evident; the first part of the *Ideen* appeared in 1784, and by 1787 three parts were published as well as three volumes of miscellaneous writings.

The September of this notable year, 1784, was marked by a visit of Claudius to the Herders, and of Friedrich Jacobi to Goethe; and we must here glance for a moment at this remarkable man Friedrich, or more commonly Fritz Jacobi, though for the most part he belongs rather to the history of Goethe than of Herder.

He was a year and a half older than Herder, and was the younger brother of Georg Jacobi, the darling poet of Gleim and the tender-hearted, by Nicolai called "the suckling." Fritz had become an enthusiastic friend of Goethe in 1774 at Cologne, where, with the moon glittering on the Rhine, he imparted to Goethe his greater knowledge of Spinoza.¹ But after four or five years the friendship was interrupted. The Jacobis had joined Wieland in starting his journal, *The Mercury*, for which Herder wrote at intervals after his arrival in Weimar. For this *Mercury* Fritz wrote his once famous novel of *Woldemar*; but Goethe turned on his former self, held up the whole sentimental

¹ *Aus meinem Leben*, book xiv. end. Others say the meeting was at Pempelfort. It was at the same time, or a month or two later, that Herder began to study Spinoza, whilst Goethe was already acquainted with some of his works in his father's library. And yet we are told by the writer in the *Fortnightly Review* mentioned above that Herder introduced Goethe to Spinoza.

school to pitiless ridicule in the *Triumph of Sentimentality*, and finished by nailing a copy of *Woldemar* to the top of a tree on the Ettersberg, to flutter out its tender leaves for the birds of the air. Jacobi was naturally indignant, but after two or three years a reconciliation was brought about, and now—as Jacobi had just lost one of his children and his wife Betty, a woman of much interest and a friend of Goethe's¹—he was invited with his sister to Weimar in hopes of comfort. Herder he had long desired to know, and had entreated Claudius, who was tutor to two of his sons, to effect a meeting; but this had been impossible, and only a few letters had passed between the two. Herder seems to have been rather frightened at him, alarmed perhaps by reports of his dignified and haughty mien; perhaps because he knew that, as Goethe puts it, “God had punished him with metaphysics.” The story of his published account of a conversation Lessing held with him on Spinoza and Goethe's *Prometheus* shortly before death, and how Jacobi and Mendelssohn contended over Lessing's dead body, is sufficiently familiar. “Spinozist, therefore Atheist!” cried Jacobi, gripping hold of a part of the deceased hero. “Deist, by the soul of Abraham!” shrieked poor old Mendelssohn, gripping hold of another part; whilst the astonished world looked on. But in the midst of the struggle, in January 1786, Mendelssohn's hands were loosened; he was going, according to his *Phædon*, to join his friend, and under the earthly Linden he walked no more. Yet Lessing was not left defenceless, for cleaving through the air with oarage of poesy came Herder with his discourse on God; and, crying “Neither Atheist, nor Deist, but Theist,” he bore him off to some dim region between the secret top of Oreb and the Dutch Jew's workshop in the Hague; and Goethe smiled for joy, though for his own part he was “always so glad to hold his peace when people began to talk about the Supreme Being.”²

We can now form for ourselves some picture of the little

¹ See *Aus meinem Leben*, book xiv. and Goethe's letters to her.

² From one of Goethe's letters to Jacobi on the subject. Jacobi's correspondence with Herder is in Herder's *Nachlass*, vol. ii.

party that was driving southward to Jena on September 27, 1784, along the road where Heine's plums were growing forty years after. They were Herder and Karoline, Claudius, Goethe with his favourite Fritz von Stein, Charlotte's son, and Friedrich Jacobi with his sister; and they were going to visit Knebel, of whom I have already vaguely spoken as the Trelawney of Weimar.

Karl von Knebel was one of the most beautiful, and at the same time pathetic, figures in the Weimar circle. He was of the same age as Herder, and he outlived all his fellow Olympians, for he did not die till 1834, two years after "all warmth seemed to have departed from the world" at Goethe's death.¹ He watched the stream of time for ninety years, the ninety years that produced Napoleon, and Goethe, and Beethoven; an age that, I suppose, has only been three times matched in the history of the world—by the centuries that saw Shakespeare and Raphael, Cæsar and Christ, Plato and Pheidias. When Knebel was born, Pope had been dead only a few months, and bonny Prince Charlie's hopes were high. When he died the Reform Bill was safely behind us, Shelley's heart had long ceased to beat, Byron was gone, Tennyson was a rising young poet, and Carlyle had written the *Sartor*. For ten years (1763-1773) Knebel served at Potsdam under Frederick the Great, of whom he has left some interesting little accounts. Here he became acquainted with Ramler, the Karschin, and the other lights of Berlin, who in many respects remained his guides through life in spite of Goethe's influence. Tired of the army, he travelled with the young Grand Duke of Weimar till Goethe superseded him, when he was appointed tutor to Prince Constantine at Tiefurt. Here he spent five years; but with Herder he was not at all intimate, though they met occasionally. He is said to be the figure that in Goethe's *Ilmenau* (1783) is seen stooping over the fire with shoulders broad and strong like a hero of old:—

Dry and good-humoured, ever with the skill
To set the circle in a roar at will.

¹ This account of Knebel is derived from his *Nachlass* (2 vols. Leipzig, 1840.)

On leaving Tiefurt he had retired to his home at Ansbach for three years, but returning to Weimar in 1784 he had found the friendship between Goethe and Herder at its height. He immediately became very intimate with the Herders, and in later years we shall find that he was their firmest friend, though our Electra at one time very nearly caused a rupture by her indignant suspicions. Close upon two hundred¹ of his letters to Herder and Karoline have been published in Herder's *Nachlass*, and a considerable number from the Herders in Knebel's *Nachlass*, thus divided and unarranged in real old-fashioned German confusion. In time he came to regard himself as almost a part of Herder's family, and yet he never remained long in Weimar. We find him complaining that it was dull; "we are all asleep here," he writes; "Goethe alone shines like a star in the night," which seems to have been a favourite comparison with the gentle and scientific old man. Indeed, he could never make up his mind where it was best for him to be; we find him now in Weimar, now in Ansbach, now in Ilmenau, and most often perhaps in the beautiful old castle of Jena. "He is a tender bird," says Karoline, "who knows not where to lay his head."

And this restlessness runs through all his character. Like Einsiedel he, too, was lacking in one great purpose in life, which would have made a unity as of art where now there is only patchwork. A curious comparison might be worked out between these two men—the result was so similar, but their natures so unlike. Knebel was almost morbidly sensitive, retiring, and diffident; and, though he had not Einsiedel's brilliant wit and large brain, yet he must have been a more loveable man, especially in old age, for, if Einsiedel was retiring, it was because he considered his average fellow-mortals hardly worthy of notice. They were alike in their devotion to natural science, so far as devotion is possible for such men. Knebel was enthusiastic over the first part of the *Ideen*, and, after reading the

¹ One hundred and ninety-nine, to be accurate, and there are more in his own *Nachlass*.

“Discourse on God,” he wrote, “From the knowledge of nature everything is to be looked for”; and Schiller, on his first visit to Weimar, said of him, “Knebel, like every one else in Goethe’s company, pays too much attention to stocks and stones, and depends on his five senses.” He might even be called a materialist with more justice than most people who bear the name, for he saw no difficulty in explaining thought in terms of matter; and in philosophy he contented himself with Lucretius and the enlightenment of the Berlin school. But whereas Einsiedel, as we are told, had not a ray of imagination, Knebel to the last fancied himself born a poet—which proves that his imagination, though strong, was not always an advantage; for though he wrote a considerable number of verses, and under great pressure from Herder and Goethe even translated Lucretius in metre, I suppose no one would now dare to call him a poet. In politics he was, for a time at least, enthusiastic for freedom, the French Revolution, and the Rights of Man. “Germany is a *terra obedientiæ*,” he cried with all the wrath that was in him; and during the troubles of the next ten years he was generally placed side by side with Herder as one of the leaders of the revolutionary party in Weimar. But a man more unlike the ideal democrat of timorous fancy it is impossible to conceive. His portraits, taken in old age, show us such a face of delicate sensibility, gentle humour, benignity, and lofty intellect, as has been given to few men, and over all lies the sorrow of a conscious failure, meekly borne. He knew that, unstable as water, he had not excelled; but his chief sadness was for the friends who had stood by him in his manhood, and one by one had dropped at his side.

This was the man whom that little party went out to Jena to see. They would find him by his window looking out over the Jena woods, as was his custom, for he was one of the truest lovers of nature’s world; and they would talk through the twilight till night came, for it was his whim to have no lamp brought till it was quite dark; and then they set off for the drive home “through the fairest moonlight,” says Herder, “all

of us half-asleep and half-awake;" and Karoline adds in a postscript, "Refreshed by your beautiful soul, which raised me above the common round of every day, I drove contented through the moonlight, whilst Goethe spoke to us of the state of the soul after death. Only he was hardly warm-hearted and enthusiastic (*schwärmerisch*) enough for the heavenly light through which we glided."

The next few years went peacefully by. Herder was wrapt up in his work.* Each year saw a new volume of the *Ideen* and *Miscellanies*, and he was beginning to take an active part in the dispute over Lessing and Spinoza. "The amount of work Herder gets through is incredible," Goethe writes to Jacobi in 1785. And yet all through the winter both he and Karoline had been far from well, and, for their health's sake, they spent July in Karlsbad with Goethe and the Frau von Stein. In September Weimar was visited by the Dutch philosopher Hemsterhuis, called "the Plato of Holland," a strangely-peaceful and quiet man, but in some respects not unlike Herder himself. One of Herder's treatises, on *Love and Egoism*, has, indeed, been published in the edition of Hemsterhuis's works as a supplement. He was attended on his journey by his patroness the Princess Gallitzin, who also extended her protection to Hamann. In the same month Forster, then professor of natural history at Wilna, in Poland, came through Weimar on his way back from Göttingen, where he had married Heyne's daughter, who, after the death of a second husband, became an authoress of some repute as Therese Huber.

Forster himself had lived a great deal in England, especially in Lancashire, and accompanied his father as naturalist on one of Captain Cook's expeditions round the world (1772-5). He had gained a very wide practical knowledge of botany, zoology, and physical science in general, also of the history and customs of primitive races, so that he could not fail to be very serviceable to Herder and Goethe at this time, and the correspondence continued for some years. He passed through Weimar again in 1787 on his way back to Göttingen, where he was to prepare

for a voyage of discovery in Russia. But the scheme came to nothing through the outbreak of a Turkish war. Forster then lived for a time at Mainz, where he was visited by the young Humboldt, whose predecessor in science he has been called. As his wife preferred to seek the society of her second husband a few years before the death of her first, Forster devoted himself to the service of the revolutionists in France, and, having been entirely cosmopolitan in his life and teaching, he did his best to betray Germany to the French. He held office under the Jacobin Government throughout the night of fear, and died in 1794, in his fortieth year, after a life of abundant variety. He was amongst the first to attempt to place the theory of heredity, instead of "innate ideas," on a scientific basis.

In the beginning of the next year Goethe was busy revising his works for a new edition, and saw hardly any one but Charlotte von Stein and the Herders. In *Werther* there was a good deal which Herder wanted changed. "We had a good scene over it," Goethe writes to Charlotte. "His wife would not let a single word in the book be altered, and defended it excellently well." It is probable that of such a book Karoline was now the best judge of the three, but some alterations towards the end were made at Herder's suggestion. It is supposed, too, that Herder considered it a fault in the story that Werther's motive for suicide was double—disappointment in love and disappointment in ambition; and, as is well known, this was the point on which Napoleon fixed in after-years. In July the calm of the friends was interrupted by the advent of Lavater on one of his apostolic progresses through Germany. Both would gladly have avoided him, but he stayed with Goethe one day, and Herder, for the first time, saw him face to face. Lavater found him "polite, friendly, and open-hearted"; but Herder, like Goethe, remained calmly indifferent to this apparition, who was so far from his present line of thought; "for," to use Goethe's words, "when a great man has a dark corner in his soul, it is very dark indeed."

About a month after this Goethe stole away to Italy and left

the Herders in great loneliness for nearly two years. "Goethe is a man in every respect, and, but for him, we should be quite alone in Weimar," Karoline writes in her indignant way to Gleim, who had been hinting suspicions. In the July of the following year (1787) a young man, lean of figure and with head thrown forward, was peering about Weimar with clear and earnest eyes, forcing every hero he met to stop and give account of himself at his peril. Unto Herder he came, and read him the manuscript of *Don Carlos*, to Herder's great delight, though before he had been inclined to despise the author of *The Robbers*, *Fiesco*, and *Cabal and Love*, having known him only by hearsay, and not foreseeing what joy for the world and what sorrow for himself was lying folded up in the soul of Schiller.

About this time the Herders seem to have been considerably hampered by the expenses of their large family. Herder's income was between 250*l.* and 300*l.* a-year, and by the end of 1787 he had seven children to keep alive, besides himself and wife and servant. We may imagine, therefore, how welcome was a gift of about 200*l.* from an unknown hand in Eisenach; and a few days afterwards the Grand Duke promised to increase his income by about 70*l.* a-year. In April, however, his infant son died. Herder was ailing, lonely, and depressed, and could not even be cheered by a short visit from Father Gleim in May. The "Discourse on God" was finished and published, and he had drawn up an elaborate scheme for a universal society of all German men of learning at the request of Karl Friedrich of Baden, whose learned wife some readers may remember long ago on the way to Strassburg. In June Herder received the news that his beloved master the Mage of the North had died in peace, after his life of storm, and was buried in the garden of the Princess Gallitzin, not far from Münster;¹ and in the same month Goethe came back "one moonlight night" full of tales of Italy and the land where the sun is warm. He was with the Herders almost every day, and the longing for travel awoke in

¹ He died at Wellberg and was buried at Angelmödde.

Herder again. We remember the cry of his boyhood, "O my Italy, thee must I one day see"; and now Friedrich von Dalberg, Canon of Worms and Speyer, antiquary, musician, and brother of Herder's acquaintance—the Governor of Erfurt, had invited him to be his companion on a journey to Italy itself. The plan was of good hope, and all was arranged with speed; leave of absence was obtained from the Grand Duke; and on the 6th of August Herder drove westward from Weimar to Erfurt, only regretting that Goethe found it impossible to bear him company into the land of Mignon.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GOOD.

“Why, where’s the need of Temple, when the walls
 O’ the world are that? What use of swells and falls
 From Levites’ choir, priests’ cries, and trumpet-calls?
 That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows,
 Or decomposes but to recompose,
 Become my universe that feels and knows.”—EPILOGUE.

WE have now gained the topmost point of the rugged upland through which our way leads. Here we may pause awhile and look around us, for the sun is still high and the place is pleasant. It is no crystal battlement of heaven that we are standing on, no shuddering pinnacle of eternal snow, abrupt, sky-cleaving. There is the less fear of wandering from our track through mist and cloud, till the world seems to vanish from under our feet in the depths of some gulf of gloom, or we are left shivering at the foot of a sheer wall of ice, and dare not turn to look behind. Yet we are raised far above the wanton marsh-lights and stifling fogs of the common plain—on the highest point of a region such as most of us can picture and some have known; a region of broad sweeps of barren heath broken by quiet valleys for the homes of men; of gently-rising slopes crossed by the flying clouds, and of sun-lit hills from which the view is wide. Here, as we rest and watch the world, our eyes are now and again irresistibly drawn to a place far off in the blue of the distance, a place of struggle and crying, of life and movement, of doubt and death and despair, of endless hope; a place where, as of old, every one strives to go every way at once, and knows not whither he would; a place which is the present time.

In the following brief account of what appear to me to be

the most important and far-reaching of Herder's works, I choose to begin with those that bear most directly on morality—partly because morality, like medicine, is universally interesting, being, in fact, the medicine of life, and no one can go through life without having to face the question of conduct, whereas many actually live without beauty and without philosophy—partly also because Herder would have put morality first himself. For though he does not often condescend to waste time, as so many have wasted it, in giving good advice, yet the great effort of his life, both in deed and word, was to maintain a pure and lofty standard of right conduct, and to oppose to the last all doctrines and systems which seemed to him likely to undermine the motives for morality which had hitherto sufficed. And, in thus standing out as the champion of morality, he was tempted, though not without reason, to consider that he stood alone of all the leaders of men. For though we can now see that morality was as little in danger as religion,—that Goethe on the one side, and Kant and Schiller on the other, were proclaiming a code of conduct at least as lofty as Herder's own, and that the Revolution, whose terrors estranged even Herder's sympathy, was, as far as it was evil, only a proof by experience that complete immorality cannot stand, but is ridiculous or, more properly, non-existent,—yet it is easy to allow that the Terror and the Goddess of Reason were not reassuring to an earnest thinker who had the future welfare of mankind close at heart; and it is one of those strange paradoxes of history, that the proclamation of one of the sternest and most exacting systems of ethics ever produced was accompanied by an outburst of the wildest immorality and rebellion, especially amongst the young, who naturally preferred flying in a mist to plodding on the dry and solid old ground. During the last ten or twelve years of Herder's life these Kantian rebels took the place of the rebels of "life according to nature," sentiment, gloomy despair, and moon-lit melancholy; but it was really the same spirit working under a different form, and Kant would have disowned his supposed followers as indignantly as Goethe and Herder disowned the sentimentalists.

Herder's method of treatment was much the same for both the forms of the disease; for, as St. Peter brought down Simon Magus by prayer, so Herder hoped to bring down these wondrous high-flyers by education in its truest and widest sense. "We must look to education and a knowledge of science," he writes, and both in education and science his first object was morality; for, indeed, if all wrong-headed and misguided people could be made to realise the truth of life as it is and the eternal laws of the universe, and had their wills trained in accordance with these, it seems as though morality would be a very simple affair. But we are still met with the difficulty that nobody can decide what the truth of life exactly is, that very little is known about the eternal laws of the universe, which to the common mind will seem, at least for a long time yet, to have no meaning beyond the laws of health and manufacture, and that, finally, every system of education, even when it is not merely a formless growth of time, is, after all, in common with so much else, but an approach to an ideal that for ever recedes.

In Herder's time the great and scientific system of education now prevailing in Germany was hardly so much as conceived; but it was an age of revolution in education—as in art, politics, and religion. Three years after Herder's birth Hecker had established in Berlin the first *Realschule*, or Modern School, as we should say, opposed to the old Gymnasias, or grammar-schools. We have seen that, as a master at Königsberg and Riga, Herder had devoted himself for the most part to *real* instruction, and had supported it with enthusiasm as a means of scattering the barren chaff-heaps of the grammarians. Since those days Basedow, the other prophet who with Lavater had attended the world-child on his Rhine journey, had attracted the eyes of mankind by the strange intellectual antics of which children were rendered capable in his forcing-house. "I would not give him a calf to educate, let alone a man," Herder wrote indignantly to Hamann. But he was better pleased with the Swiss Pestalozzi, who was only two years younger than himself, and had already begun his experiments in the rational training

of growing minds.¹ In 1783 Friedrich August Wolf, the Homeric critic, went to Halle; and this may be called the first step in the great practical reform in German education as a whole, though since the middle of the century—in Prussia at all events—there had been some sort of State control over schools; and education was never left so entirely as with us to the caprice of irresponsible masters and the pleasure of parents, indifferent or endlessly gullible. In 1788 the “leaving examination,” now so important a feature in the German system, was first established as a test for admission to the Prussian universities.² So that, in reading Herder’s theories and proposals with regard to education, we must remember that he was dealing with a state of things very different from that now existing in Germany; in most cases, indeed, his proposals, whether right or wrong, would be more applicable to modern England.

Of Herder’s theories of education in his more youthful years we already know something, so that we can afford to be brief, though a very sufficient account of his mature views on the subject has come down to us. As head of the church and schools in Weimar, it was his duty to deliver an address on education at least once a year, an address for which Latin was the tongue ordained; but Herder, who was always anxious to be intelligible rather than learned, preferred to use German; and after his death these addresses were found carefully written out word for word as they were delivered. Twenty-four of them, together with two memorial speeches on his colleagues, Musäus (died 1787) and Heinze (died 1790), and a few short notices bearing on the subject, were collected by Georg Müller, and published under the title of *Sophron*, which title proves that in Müller’s opinion, at all events, Herder’s first object in education was to produce men of complete moral self-control. It must be remembered that, when he speaks of education, Herder is not beating

¹ For an account of Pestalozzi’s method see Mr. Herbert Spencer’s treatise on *Education*.

² For these facts in the history of German education I am indebted to Mr. Matthew Arnold’s book on *The Higher Schools and Universities of Germany*.

the air, nor vaguely sprinkling rose-water to charm the ignorant, like so many pleasant theorists who have never fronted chaos under the semblance of a class of boys. He had served a stern apprenticeship for years, and was no amateur, but knew of what he was speaking. Even in Weimar he would sometimes find opportunities to teach in the Gymnasium, and on Heinze's death Herder took his place till his successor was appointed; for he had inherited the instinct of teaching from his father, and it is noteworthy that even Gervinus has nothing but praise for him here.

There was plenty of room for reforms in education near at hand. Some forty years before Herder arrived in Weimar, it had become evident to the advanced spirits of the place that a knowledge of Latin syntax was not sufficient armour wherewith to go out into life. "If the Gymnasium," they reasoned, "cannot train our sons for the battle of life, let it at least train them for the battles of war. Look at this army of giants old Friedrich Wilhelm has got together; and may not he or his unruly young Frederick turn them to a purpose against which our Latin syntax would avail little?" Herder accordingly found that the Gymnasium, instead of being the peaceful home of the Muses, had become a kennel for the dogs of war. The youths that were to be the fathers of the future were taught riding, fencing, and the politics of diplomacy; dancing, deportment, and instrumental music had been added, in accordance with another tendency of the time, which, in Herder's words, was ready to forgive everything in a young man who was graceful in society. Partly, as has been said, owing to Herder's own rebellion against the inhuman dulness of the grammarians, it had become the fashion to regard the perusal of novels and verses as a sufficient education; and if a boy could act a little or sketch the outline of a play he at once claimed all the privileges of genius. Under the banners of Nature and Genius plentiful societies were founded to cultivate the arts of smoking, beer-drinking, and cards; and though, when we remember how poor and barren a thing education too often becomes in the hands of pedants, it is impossible not to sympathise with these

youthful efforts at improvement, we must also agree with Herder, that the arts of beer, smoking and cards, of play-acting, and even verse-writing, are not in themselves a sufficient equipment for life, which is not all youth, but reaches in many cases to old age. But the reaction from pedantry had been so strong that, after Herder and Heinze had worked together for the Weimar schools for fourteen years, the evils of it were not entirely obliterated; and, as soon as there seemed some hope in this direction, the first waves of the Kantian philosophy swept over Germany, and all the youth began talking in an unknown tongue, as Herder bitterly complained, of *Ich + Nicht-Ich — Ich + mit-Ich*, or to paraphrase, of Subject + Object — Subject + Ob-Subject;¹ a formula which, to Herder, seemed sad nonsense, and no doubt was equally incomprehensible to most who used it; whereas the aberrations of conduct by which it was generally accompanied were evident and intelligible to all men.

In his efforts for the cause of education, therefore, Herder found himself struggling against three strong forces: the benumbing poison of pedantry, the follies of the "Nature-and-Genius" school, to which the prevailing military mania may be added, and, lastly, the vagaries of misguided Kantians. It would not be difficult to find parallels to these three in modern England; only, as we boast endless powers of dissent, further subdivision would be necessary. Our school of Nature and Genius, for instance, seems to have very little connection with things military; and, conversely, our army-men seem to have very little connection with Nature and Genius.

In dealing with such opponents Herder was always fearless and unhesitating. Having a lofty conception of the reality and earnestness of life, he stated his ideal of what education ought to be in forcible terms, that must have made many of his listeners start. "Schools," he said, "according to the sayings of our forefathers, are workshops of the spirit of God;" and by

¹ See Mr. Ruskin's exquisite parody in *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. p. 159.

the spirit of God they and he meant, as he goes on to explain, "the mighty impulse of nature, the living strength which imparts life, the tendency in man ever to become more perfect, clearer in understanding, purer in heart, stronger in will, nearer to the Godhead, and fashioned more according to His image. At once we are raised far above the pedantic old conceptions of schools as temples of Apollo and the Muses, who for the most part took the form of Latin grammars and vocabularies, or, at the best, of Anacreontic verse and imitations called faultless."

But the time for such things, says Herder, is gone. "We must educate for life, not for the schools." The whole man must be developed by study and exercise in everything that is humane, everything that makes a man. Above all, the moral character and judgment must be established and strengthened, and, so this be done, it is of small importance how. The understanding is like an instrument which is serviceable for any use when once it is sharp and polished. Whether, therefore, the means be Greece or Rome, theology or mathematics, is unimportant, provided the instrument has been perfected for the uses of life.¹ And by life is meant the life of humanity in its widest sense, not merely the life of exchange and mart. With those who wish to turn our schools into apprentice shops for different trades, Herder had little sympathy. "Public schools," he says, "are institutions of the State for the production, not of future townsfolk only, but in the first instance of men. We are men before we are professional men, and woe unto us if in our future profession we cease to be men." Now the understanding and judgment of all men that are to be worthy of the name must both be clear and solid. It seems, indeed, impossible to be clear without being also solid; for the ignorant man is not lucid, neither is the obtuse man profound. And, to render the mind clear and solid, two things seemed above all necessary to Herder—discipline and hard work.

We can imagine what a shock his sayings must have given to the sensibilities of the darlings of nature and genius; for, as has been said, Herder was no rose-water theorist. Without discipline, a school is no training, according to him, for it is discipline that makes character, and it is absurd to talk of royal roads to wisdom. Once for all, there are no royal roads,

¹ That this theory is not altogether true, or at least admits of much abuse, has been shown by Mr. Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. iv. Appendix III.

and "the gods sell us nothing without trouble." "Quickly come, quickly go," is a universal law, and the beautiful will never cease to be hard, nor the path of knowledge steep. The self-educated man, for want of discipline, too often fails of depth and accuracy; and Herder has nothing but scorn for the dilettanti "men of genius, who have learnt, by God's grace, to discourse eloquently on any subject in heaven and earth," like the sophists of old or the journalists of more recent times.¹ Knowledge that is poured into the mind as through a funnel, by lectures and such easy methods, which involve no effort to the mind itself, is therefore worse than useless; for this is the knowledge that puffs up and tends to conceit, and it gives no training to the understanding, even if it be retained by the exercise of mere memory, which, taken alone, is a dangerous rather than enviable gift. Herder would therefore have the teacher always follow the method of Socrates, and draw out what was in the mind, rather than load it with a mass of heterogeneous information, which is the common English method justly called "cram," and strictly practised in nearly all schools, public and private, and at the universities. In our advanced girls' schools, where they work for examinations, the system appears to have become especially rampant; chiefly, I suppose, because most boys, being endowed with a salutary spirit of rebellion, will not allow themselves to be imposed upon after a certain point. Of this so-called education, in which the learner is merely passive; of this imposed dogmatism, which is the choke-weed of wisdom; of these eternal second-hand criticisms, which, as far as intellectual advancement is concerned, might just as well be rolled into paper-pills and forced down the throats of reluctant youth;²—of all such things Herder would

¹ In almost the same words, too, we have heard a "woman of learning" exclaim with fervour, "I thank my God, I am quite as much at home [*eben so gut zu Hause*] in Heaven as on earth"; meaning that she knew something of astronomy.

² For instance, in a large and important school I have known the candidates for an examination obliged to learn by heart a criticism which knocked off

have nothing ; indeed, he could not have conceived that the system against which he protested would ever reach such lengths. To check the evil, he insists that once for all we must abandon all thought of forcing. The tree of the forest grows, and is not put together by the shifts of a stage-carpenter ; and, if we continue our patent process of "cram," we must expect the characters and intellects of children to be as unlovely and inorganic as daubs of painted canvas. "There they stand, these centenarian children !" Herder exclaims, "and we look and shudder."

As to examinations, Herder has not much to tell us ; for as yet it had not been discovered that examination is the panacea for suffering mankind. It seems to have been the custom in the schools in Weimar for the master of each form to hold a *viva voce* examination once or perhaps twice a year. Herder commends the practice as an encouragement to industry, wakefulness, and attention ; but he warns the masters to ask only what they can fairly expect to be answered, not to seek to display themselves, nor to suppose that examination can ever be an exact test, but to remember it is only a subordinate means in education. There is nothing to show that Herder would have disapproved of the modern system in Germany, where the great "leaving examination," that admits to the universities and the learned professions, is not so much a test of knowledge as of industry and sound training ; but as to the general idea of the English, who rush into examinations of all kinds as the final aim and complete test of education, it is only too probable that he would have regarded this as a curse of heaven, a terrific nightmare, which in our sleep we take for solid life.

To secure a sound training for the youth of Weimar, one of Herder's favourite schemes was to establish a training-college for schoolmasters, as Heyne did in Göttingen and Wolf in Halle and Berlin ; but here, as in other reforms, his way was for a

Lessing in a line and a half, though of Lessing they knew absolutely nothing. Any one connected with modern education is fortunate if he cannot remember similar cases.

long time blocked by the consistory. After repeated failures, however, of which he complains bitterly to Gleim, he founded something of the sort in 1787. This was only one of many efforts to improve the condition of the masters in the public schools. The master's position, he maintained, must be high and secure ; he must be raised above all private anxieties, as far as his office goes ; and must be out of reach of the temptations of self-advertisement, which beset the owners of private or proprietary schools. In practice Herder allowed his masters to follow their own methods as far as possible, finding they could not work so well on any other ; but at the same time he says, "we trust our children to the State, not to the whims of an imaginative teacher." Therefore, for the sake both of masters and learners, he considered that the State must be held responsible for the management of schools ; and he enthusiastically defended the public schools, with their high spirit and grand tradition—"their genius or guiding angel," as he calls it—against those who were beginning to cry up the system of private schools, claiming for these a higher moral tone.

Coming down to the lower details of practice, Herder complains that in the public schools the forms were too large, and the work not interesting enough. As to subjects, he would have the lower forms taught elementary science and mathematics on Pestalozzi's method. The necessity of natural science, he foresees, will become more and more evident, "for, through the study of science, many old fables have vanished, and things, with their methods, are becoming clearer." Geography, history, and natural history must be taught in close connexion, and will thus cease to be mere strings of meaningless words. But man has a natural need of beauty, especially in youth—and though there is no real opposition between beauty and science, and though to the specialist his art is always beautiful¹—yet natural science is not in itself sufficient for the average man. Herder

¹ *Sophron*, p. 37. I give the reference lest it should be thought I am following Mr. Matthew Arnold rather than Herder. On the subject of education the resemblance is often very striking.

quotes with approval the saying of Frederick the Great, that good translation from the ancients is the first means of culture for a people and language. Grammar and the correct use of the mother-tongue must be taught for the sake of accuracy; but the object in the study of languages should not be the grammar but the literature. And here the custom which sets boys to work on such books as Cæsar's¹ is mistaken, for these are too dull and devoid of beauty; and, if the best means of education is the knowledge of all that goes to make up man in the highest sense, we must devote ourselves to the study of all the best and most beautiful fruits of the human spirit in literature, in philosophy, and inquiries into the outside world. Neither must the body be neglected; the whole man is to be cultivated in equal balance; but it is to be remembered, according to Herder, that neither knowledge nor athletics are ends in themselves; he would not have a Gymnasium become a training-place for petty ambition and conceit, such as we have been told English schools have become, or are likely to become, "barrel-organs playing serious or secular tunes, according to the neighbourhood;"² but he maintains that the final aim of education is nothing else than conduct or life, which, as we have also been told, can only be said to begin with self-annihilation; and the final aim of life, says Goethe, is life itself. As to the best means of education, it will have been seen that Herder was looking forward, as we are still looking forward, to the happy time when the wolf of science shall dwell with the lamb of letters, when the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and the child of nature shall put his hand on the philosopher's den.

Before passing on to Herder's second means of proclaiming the Good, we may notice a passage in one of these school addresses, which does not properly belong to education, but stands midway between the training of youth and the conduct of manhood. In his address on schools as "Workshops of the

¹ *Sophron*, p. 238.

² See *Lectures on the Electra and Macbeth*, by A. H. Gilkes, Preface.

Spirit of God," after urging his hearers to follow knowledge and truth and beauty as long as they are at school, he goes on to warn them—half in earnest, half in irony—against the temptation of becoming men of letters in after-life. "O, become men of business," he cries; "men of letters are the unhappiest of all, and from the condition of our times they must become more and more unhappy from year to year." He even foresees a time when, partly through their numbers, partly through the unworthiness of many, partly because "the world is sick of knowledge, and of the word of God, and only craves amusement,"—for these reasons a man of letters may run the risk of hunger, nay of starvation (*verhungern*). I believe that every great writer of modern times, except perhaps Emerson, has at some time in his life given us similar advice. But there seems as yet no sign that the race of men of letters is dying out, and the good advice is likely to be as unavailing as a law against madness.

What Herder was able to realise for the cause of education in Weimar itself fell far short of his hopes, chiefly through the solemn league of opposition in the consistory. Yet as Ephorus of schools or minister of education he succeeded in re-establishing what is called the Ernst Foundation School, which offered small exhibitions and board to the twelve most deserving or poorest scholars. Finding, further, that the chaplain to the garrison was wasting his honeyed words on empty benches, he induced the Grand Duke to divert the funds and increase the pay of the schoolmasters, especially in the country districts, where education had fallen into the hands of ignorant old soldiers, who were glad to teach nothing for four or five pounds a year. In the same year (1787) Herder at last set on foot a kind of training college for some thirty or forty young masters, though again the reality was a poor thing compared to his conception. His proposals for a reform in the elementary schools were carried out by Günther after his death. Remembering what he himself had suffered in boyhood from want of books, he established, and partially supplied out of his own small income, a fund to purchase books for very poor scholars, and he endeavoured to found

a general library for the Gymnasium. In 1786, during his very busiest period, he found time to write an alphabet (*A B C Buch*) for the lower forms, and in 1798 he published an explanation of the Catechism by Luther, which every German Protestant boy is obliged to learn. He also long intended to write a simple book on the natural history of plants and animals for the use of the lower forms, but unfortunately the idea was never carried out. Here, then, are plenty of proofs that Herder was not a man of dainty whims, vaguely hovering in the air; but having his foot firmly on the ground he was full of practical endeavour as far as his position allowed. That more was not allowed him, that for want of action he was driven into regions of atmosphere too rare for a spirit which craved for the positive and actual, I suppose to have been one of the main causes of what he himself used to call "the failure of his life."

But Herder was not only Ephorus or supreme director of the Weimar schools, he was also supreme in affairs ecclesiastical, though here, too, his supremacy was too often reduced to the shadow of a name by the combined efforts of his consistory. Without entering into a detailed account of the German ecclesiastical system of those times, it is sufficient to remember that by reason of his appointment Herder ranked first among the clergy of the town, and had a voice in the small upper consistory, and that he was created vice-president of the consistory in 1789, and president twelve years afterwards, on the death of the old president, his most wearisome opponent, aged and blind in body, and aged and blind in soul. But in spite of the consistory, he occupied throughout, actually if not legally, the most important position in the Weimar church, always of course under the Grand Duke himself. Or, to translate into English ways, we may figure Herder as the Archbishop of Saxe-Weimar, except that his income was hardly a fortieth part of the income which befalls our English head representative of the gospel of renunciation. Such being his position we are bound to take some account of his labours in this sphere too, though it is tempting to overlook them and pass on to themes of greater interest. But

we must remember that religion was, after all, Herder's professed aim in life ; and since, as years went on, he came more and more to regard his office as an instrument for the furtherance of the morally good, the account of it naturally falls in this place. And here we will begin with the practical, as being the easier ; for religion is a wider thing than education ; and it is one of the fortunate inconsistencies of life that people are generally agreed as to the means that conduce to the morally good, however much they may think to dispute about the end.

Herder's first object was to root out the tangled abuses that were choking the powers of the Church for good. To this end he introduced his new systems for the registration of births and marriages, and for the better ordering of ecclesiastical accounts. He also ordained that the management of public charities and foundations should come under the supervision of the consistory, and he reformed—or, at all events, attempted to reform—several scandals that had grown round the practice of confession. It seems to have been possible, for instance, to buy dispensations of certain sins by paying money into the Government treasury, whereupon the sinner was absolved by the consistory “in the Prince's name” ; for it was the ruin of the average German courts that they were barbarous in luxury and limited in funds. This kind of dispensation differed very little from the Indulgences of Tetzel, as Herder himself protested, and it seemed an offence to him. Again, members of certain walks and positions of life, such as soldiers, the well-to-do, and people of the court, had long been accustomed to consider that such as they had no need of spiritual physician or dispensation, or at least were not required to be so careful of their souls' health as the ordinary creeping mortals around them. “But,” said Herder, “in the Church all its members are Christians and nothing more,” which must have seemed a hard saying to many a high-stepping child of nature, and many a smug type of comfortable circumstances, who had imagined, as all are inclined to imagine, that “the Almighty would think twice before damning a person of his quality.”

Herder's schemes for a theological college were not so suc-

cessful as in the case of the training-college for masters, for, though he drew up several detailed plans, and was very earnest in the matter, he was continually thwarted either by the consistory or want of funds. Towards the end of his life he used to tell Karoline that on the whole he was glad of this ill-success, for on several practical points in the scheme his views had changed. His object was to train candidates for ordination that they might recognise their true position amongst the increasing difficulties of the time, and to give them an opportunity for practical work, that so the responsible positions in the Church might no longer be filled by unripe boys, without any special fitness for their duty ("for the strictest examination," he says, "is useless"), and that the parishes might no longer be led hither and thither, like senseless sheep, by the first charlatan (*Marktschreier*) who lifted up his voice.

It was chiefly to meet the want which he had hoped to supply by a theological college that Herder wrote his series of *Letters on the Study of Theology* (1780-1). In these, as in the *Letters to Theophron* (1782), and a careful sketch of a three years' course for a theological student (1782), practical suggestions are very frequent; for, as Herder himself says, without actual examples and instances his good advice is too likely to become painted mist.¹ Above all, he urges the young clergy to practise teaching in schools before they attempt anything further, and to preach as little as possible; but, if preaching is unavoidable, to be on their guard against "those commonplace sketches of virtues and vices, the darling themes of witty Frenchmen and humdrum journalists."

They should also not be careful to read much (Herder was writing for Germans), but should look out upon life as it is, and observe the course of it, so acquiring a firm foothold for the future; "for in age a man stands still, and thinks that therefore no one ought to go further, but that the colours which were

¹ *Zur Religion und Theologie*, Band x. s. 47. It seems rather cruel that Coleridge should have borrowed the expression and turned it against Herder himself. See Appendix I.

fashionable in his youth should abide for ever; a man clings to the ways of his youth, and advance is impossible after certain years.”¹ Herder was inclined to think this an advantage on the whole, supposing that the man thereby gained in steadfastness. Of the last part of his own life, his saying is only too true; but, if it were universally true, how happy would those be who die before thirty! For the truth of the old proverb is, not that because the gods love them some die young, but that because they have died young, therefore the gods love them.

Of Herder's own preaching, almost as much as is possible has been already said. Of the few sermons that were printed in his lifetime nearly all celebrate some external event: a birth, a death, a churching, or a confirmation in the grand-ducal family; and it is not often that sermons on these occasions are the most interesting a man can preach, any more than the perfunctory ode on a royal marriage is to be ranked with the rest of a poet's work. Yet the sermon on the birth of the Hereditary Prince of Weimar (1783) was received with unbounded admiration, and became widely popular; it was translated, I believe, once or twice into English. It was on this occasion that Wieland said, in his ecstatic way, “Herder preached like a God”; and to Merck he wrote, “I know nothing so pure, so sublime and simple, so appealing to the heart, so beautiful in thought and beautiful in word, in German or any other tongue.” Goethe devoted a long letter to more sober criticism of the copy for printing; he characteristically complains that Herder had left too marked a gulf between the present and the future; and that in the sketch of an ideal education for a prince—which, according to Herder, was to aim at health and strength, insight and wisdom, justice and goodness, and love to God and religion—room enough had not been left for the fine arts. “True,” says Goethe, “a prince must devote himself to works of benevolence and utility, and it is a mistake to allow too much place for the passion for the beautiful; still, other passions are worse and commoner.”

¹ *Zur Religion und Theologie*, Band x. s. 159.

In general tone, to judge from the accounts of others, and the few short sketches that have come down to us, Herder's sermons seem to have been the reverse of doctrinal, as, indeed, might have been expected, except, perhaps, during the Bückeburg period. One of his ecclesiastical reforms was to break through the old custom, or perhaps law, according to which the text for the sermon was always chosen from the Gospel for the Sunday; whence it had come about, that the common people remained ignorant of the rest of the Bible, and the sermons of the average parson had become a barren series of monotonous phrases, a kind of doctrinal merry-go-round—devoid alike of intellect and merriment. Herder's method rather, was either to expound some passage of the Bible in a simple and human manner, or to enforce some high principle of life that might stick in the hearts of his hearers. For the object of all true teachers is, by one means or another, to inspire others with love for an ideal higher than themselves. Man does not live by bread alone; and though it be true that a people, as well as an army, "goes upon its belly," yet, just as mere progress in that position is not the final aim of an army, so neither should this be the final aim of a people. It is not, therefore, difficult to accept the account of Herder's preaching given by Schiller, though it is possible that a covert sneer is lurking in the last part: "It is all straightforward, popular, and natural; a proposition of practical philosophy applied to certain details of life; a moral lesson which might be delivered in a mosque just as well as in a church"; and, we may add, this would be an advantage rather than a fault—if a Mohammedan happened to be present. Of action Herder was very sparing; he preached in quiet tones, but with endless variety, as became a musician. Wilhelm von Humboldt was struck by his extreme simplicity, but described him as a true orator, who could hold the attention of his audience by the mere charm of his voice.

We can now venture a step further, and examine Herder's attitude toward some of the vexed religious questions of his time; and we shall be met in the first place by his interpreta-

tion of the Hebrew Scriptures. For, though the so-called "God-intoxicated" Spinoza—the result of countless generations of pure monotheism—could rightly say, "Men of high speculation have, I think, nothing to do with the Scriptures; for my part, I have learnt none of God's eternal attributes from the Scriptures, nor have been able to learn any;"¹ yet Herder had not to deal with men of high speculation, for of such there are few, and most Europeans were still content to seek their highest religion in these self-same Hebrew Scriptures as of old. But we will keep Spinoza's saying in our minds, lest we should be tempted to exaggerate the importance of Herder's exegesis, or of any theological controversy whatever by confusing it with religion.

Some such mistake appears to me to have arisen in the mind of no less a man than Coleridge, most magnificent of theosophists, though on such a point I speak with the bated breath of hesitation, knowing little of theological subtleties and disputations except their superficial wearisomeness. Coleridge, however, at all events at the beginning of this century, was far too great a man to be wearisome, and no one can fail to be charmed with the supreme eloquence and wit with which he has hurriedly annotated three of Herder's works—two theological and one quasi-philosophic.² Besides their wit and penetration, these notes abound throughout in the thorough-going abuse of eighty years ago, and the frequency of such phrases as "drunken self-conceit," "whip-syllabub," "vile trash," "impudent sophistry," "lullaby lie," "demi-semi-quavering philosoph," and worse things, must be historically interesting, and perhaps refreshing to our more gentle and dubious age, when no one seems certain of anything except of his own uncertainty. But the dispute

¹ Epistle 34. Translated in Mr. Pollock's *Spinoza*, p. 52.

² *On the Resurrection*, the *Letters on the Study of Theology*, and the *Kalligone*, Herder's second attack on Kant. Coleridge's copies of these works are preserved in the British Museum. His notes are generally in pencil, and several words have become illegible to me or have been cut away by binders. But I have copied them out as carefully as I could, and purpose to publish them in an appendix for the benefit of those who take at least as much interest in Coleridge as I myself, but are unable to refer to the originals.

itself, like all disputes between men who really belong to the same party, and are fighting on the same side (and there are only two parties in the world, if so many as two), the dispute itself has with time ceased to be of great interest. It is true that Coleridge's conception of religion was entirely different from Herder's; and in matters of theosophy it would be impossible to place Herder on the level of Coleridge for a single moment. For he had little or nothing of that gorgeous imagination on the wings of which Coleridge could mount to the seventh heaven at will, and pass out of reach of criticism, if not of vision. Yet Herder's work for religion, from this side too, was not without result and significance; perhaps it was even more truly modern than the theosophism of the intervening period. Keeping, therefore, to our ground, we will let Coleridge "fly away" for the present, and examine what was the meaning of the task Herder set before himself, and how far he succeeded therein, judging him—as every man must be judged—by the best, not by the worst, that is in him.

To begin with Herder's interpretation of the Scripture, the keynote of his method is struck on the first page of his *Letters on the Study of Theology*, where he says, "We must read the Bible in a human way" (*menschlich*, translated by Coleridge "human-natural"); that is to say, we must read the series of Hebrew poets and historians included in the Bible in the same spirit as we read Hesiod, Thucydides, and Æschylus; we must interpret their history and their thought in close connection with their times, and not set up their maxims of morality or tradition as universal imperatives. Thus only can we hope to recognise the full beauty of Judaism and of Christianity, and the immortal literature which they have produced, and at the same time to silence all scoffing and childish persiflage by ourselves adopting the basis of free criticism, and proving that the beauty of the Bible is thereby enhanced rather than diminished.

In these *Letters* and in two volumes of *Christian Writings*, in which are included the treatises on the Resurrection, the Saviour, and the Gift of Tongues, Herder endeavours, for the

sake of theological students, to read certain passages of the Bible by the light of this "human" method; and though, like most great men who have written much but have had no definite system of philosophy, he abounds in inconsistencies, and though, after the great advances criticism has made since his day, few of his interpretations can be considered final, yet, as long as he holds his ground and is true to his method, he is safe. His object was to induce others to see the Bible as it was and is in itself, not as it has become under the dusty coating of centuries of dogmatism. No one will call the effort vain who has felt how the charm of the Bible continually vanishes or is dulled under the drowsy routine of use and wont. So long have people been accustomed to regard the Bible as a decent matter of course, or as a book to which it is improper to look for satisfaction to human interest and human sense of beauty, that we now read it or listen to it with the same expression of gentle contentment or resignation that is considered seemly in church. Its very words have become so familiar that it requires an effort to prevent them slipping through the mind as glibly and with as little meaning as the alphabet. We might compare Herder's method to the great Pre-Raphaelite movement in painting.¹ To those who would joyfully welcome the most destructive criticism, the most rapid persiflage, to arouse them from senseless apathy (for then at least they would be awake, whereas death and sleep were brothers of old), men who have attempted what Herder attempted will always be venerable, no matter what their failings.

Herder's great opponents were the scoffers on one side and dogmatism on the other; both were stronger in his day than in ours, and he, trying to take his stand between the two and reveal the follies of each, was naturally heartily abused by both. But, on the whole, he probably regarded dogmatism as the more dangerous foe. It is difficult for us to imagine the weary sand-

¹ "We find ourselves reading St. Mark or St. Luke with the same admiring, but uninterested, incredulity, with which we contemplate Raphael."—*Modern Painters*, vol. iii. p. 57, "On the False Ideal—Religious."

heaps of barren scholasticism under which the German mind—Lutheran, Reformed, or Pietistic—had striven to smother and bury the pure spirit of Christianity. How long, said Herder, are we to lie in the prison of dogma, squabbling over scholia and harping on diminutive points of doctrine, till we cannot see the wood for the number of the trees? “People have treated Christianity as the old scholiasts treated Aristotle.”¹ In his later writings he speaks with praise of his old opponents Michaëlis and Spalding for their effort to break through the yoke of German scholasticism. He even acknowledges Nicolai’s services in the same attempt.² For “now is the time of expurgation (*des Herausthuns*), the time for restoring will come;”³ and the ground must be cleared of the dead jungle before the colonist can plant his vineyard and sit under the fig-tree. One is almost inclined to envy these sappers and miners of the last century; the work before them was so quick, so simple and straightforward, whereas the great organic growths hardly move from year to year.

On the more positive side, Herder’s view of Christianity may be conjectured from the criticism of Jean Paul on Herder’s treatise called *The Saviour* :—

You have reconciled philosophy and theology, and the man Jesus is now a man for the second time. Let no one again give him the rouge of divinity (*göttliche Schminke*) which hides all his noble features.

It might be replied that philosophy has properly nothing to do with such a question, but I am inclined to think (though indeed this is too wide a subject for generalisation, except after very wide experience, which has not been mine) that the German mind tends to regard religion as intellectual rather than emotional; as doctrinal or philosophic rather than personal and “heart-felt”; as a matter for reason rather than faith; at all events, I believe the confusion of these two conceptions to have been the cause of that inconsistency and wavering demeanour in

¹ *Zur Theologie und Religion*, Band x. s. 7.

² *Ibid.* s. 275.

³ *Ibid.* s. 11.

Herder when dealing with a question like this, whereat Coleridge took such offence; and justly, from his point of view, though he is unjust in the motives he attributes. It is quite true that Herder did try to occupy a middle position, and those who, like Coleridge, denounce him as a "spy" and "assassin," or blame him for trying to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds, are welcome to get what good they can from their abuse. But all who stand as passionless spectators to the scene, with sympathies about equally divided between the piteous terror of the hare and the mad exultation of the hounds, will understand that Herder's attempt, and even his inconsistency, were not only inevitable, taken in connection with his time, but also praiseworthy.

They were inevitable because, having come under the influence of such men as Hamann, Klopstock, and Lavater, who, as far as Christianity went, proclaimed pure love and unquestioning faith, and came nearer to the ordinary English conception of religion than I believe to be common in Germany—having once come under this influence Herder was never able to free himself entirely from it; whilst, on the other hand, he was continually driven by his German mind to probe and speculate and philosophise into the grounds of this faith, and was thus led, half-unconsciously to himself, by his keen sense of history and criticism, back to premises from which his original conclusions do not readily follow. I myself am inclined to think that Herder's temporary alliance with Lavater and his life-long admiration of Klopstock's religious poems were not really of advantage to him. I believe that whenever he approached theology the influence of such men unconsciously blinded his eyes; he continually put himself back on their ground without perceiving that the position was for him a false position. All men with sympathies as wide as Herder's are tempted to do the same; and I suppose this to be the cause of much of the sermonizing and exclamatory religion with which some of his theological works are overloaded. But it may be replied that such things are in the nature of theological works, and edify

those for whom they are written; also, that such men as Lavater prevented Herder from drifting into the commonplace religion of sleepy routine. And that is true too.

Again, Herder's attempt, if not his inconsistency, was also praiseworthy. He saw that the religious system, which for more than a thousand years had dictated the code of morality for Europe, was now assaulted on all sides. His wide view of history enabled him to see how essential the Christian religion had been if only as an instrument for the furtherance of humanity. He looked around and saw nothing that could take its place. The sanctions of Christianity once broken through, he supposed another period of chaos would succeed. At the same time no one was more keenly alive to the beauty of Christianity in itself. He saw that, however much people might fight round the edges, the heart of the religion had become indispensable for mankind. "It is impossible for man to go back now that he has once reached Christianity," the worship of self-denial, the sanctity of sorrow, the reverence for what is low, says Goethe, in the well-known passage in *Meisters Wanderjahre*; and Herder's position was exactly the same. He is inclined to think that the doctrines about Christ were not at all essential to Christianity; that the idea was everything, and that the central idea was the complete morality of self-abnegation. For the truth of the idea he looked to its omnipotent success rather than to miracles and signs of divine origin,¹ and thinking thus he also believed that the interpreter must be modern. He thought that to the mass of mankind it was useless to cry back; the modern spirit must be taken into account, and those who strive to defend Christianity by an appeal from the critical to-day to the organic age of fathers and popes, only widen the gulf and draw a harder line between themselves and the thought of the world. For it is no good to forget the time of day, and all such attempts as these would have seemed to Herder as absurd as to command the Nile, as it burns past the Pyramids, to turn back and seek its fountains of

¹ Here again it seems rather cruel of Coleridge to use one of Herder's leading principles against him.

undiscovered snow. Yet he himself "wished he had been born in the Middle Ages"; but, clearly perceiving that he was not, he accepted the sad fact and did what yet he could to battle against chaos. That his efforts were not vain is proved by the testimony of such people as the Frau von Stein, Georg Müller, and Jean Paul. Some of us will always need such men as Herder to interpret and mediate between the past and future, and no one except reactionists or revolutionists will feel bound to criticise them harshly as "spies" or "arch-Jesuits," or anything of the sort, but will keep an open eye for their services and forgive them much, recognising the purity of their purpose and the difficulties of their lot. Nay, they need no forgiveness; they are the very salt of the earth.

Into Herder's personal religion I do not intend to examine more closely. A man's religion is to others the life he has led, and all definition and dogmatism on such a subject is vain. "The highest cannot be spoken in words," says Goethe; and again, "there are concerns of thought and sentiment which properly should not be spoken of except between God and the individual." If we still want to be more precise we may follow out the line of thought suggested by such sentences as the following, in Herder's own words:

Religion is that which binds our conscience; it is an inner certainty, incapable of mathematical demonstration; religion is the consciousness what we are as parts of the world, what we ought to be as men and have to do.¹ We strive over opinions, but opinions are not religion, for there is but one religion, though it appears under many forms.²

Some have said that Herder set humanity above religion, that in fact his religion was humanity, and he only regarded what is generally called religion as an instrument of morality; and it is quite true that Herder speaks more about humanity than most of us would find edifying now that the word seems likely to become a formula and fetter as warping and restricted as anything which it was supposed to supersede; it is also true

¹ *Zur Religion und Theologie*, Band xii. pp. 235, 236.

² *Ibid.* p. 254.

that he laid greater stress on the morally good than on any other phase of human life, though he was not careful to define the morally good, being always a practical teacher rather than an ethical philosopher. But, when we are asked to accept neat and piquant summaries of the inmost recesses of a man's soul (such, I mean, as "humanitarian" of Herder, "great heathen" of Goethe, "Calvinist who has lost his creed," of Carlyle), we shall generally find it safest to say with Job, "Lo, these are parts of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him." For Wisdom saith, "I alone compassed the circuit of heaven, and walked in the bottom of the deep. In the waves of the sea, and in all the earth, and in every people and nation, I got a possession. I am the mother of fair love, and fear, and knowledge, and holy hope: I therefore, being eternal, am given to all my children which are named of him. They that eat me shall yet be hungry, and they that drink me shall yet be thirsty." For the first man knew her not perfectly; no more shall the last find her out. For her thoughts are more than the sea, and her counsels profounder than the great deep.¹

¹ *Ecclesiasticus*, xxiv. 5, 6, 18, 21, 28, 29.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BEAUTIFUL.

“ We get so near, so very, very near;
 ’Tis an old tale.”—PARACELSUS.

DURING the last hundred and fifty years so much that might have been spared has been said about the beautiful, that we are at length coming to the conclusion that very few people indeed should be allowed to say anything more; that even those few must be brief, lest we turn and rend them; and that the more beauty that is produced and the less that is said about it the better; for criticism which consists, as is the common way, of mere exclamations of praise or blame, soon palls and becomes nauseous, whether we agree with it or whether we disagree; and criticism which pretends to science and analyses emotions, reasoning of this and that, is only too likely to rub off that first and irretrievable bloom of joy, which by the contemplation of the beautiful is shed over minds whose sense of beauty is innate and springs from their own corresponding beauty, and not from any refinements of knowledge and dogmatic principles. As a rule, therefore, it seems best to be silent and leave the beautiful to the safe keeping of the producers, the poets and artists—that is to say, the men of genius—who are always few but supreme, being raised far above the strictures of criticism, not following rules but unconsciously revealing them. For “men may devine and glosen up and down,”¹ but the laws of beauty are eternal, though only a man of genius can give us a glimpse of them; and the man of genius in criticism is at least as rare as the man of genius in poetry and art.

¹ *The Wif of Bathes Prologue.*

But then we are brought face to face with the question which was perplexing every one in Herder's time, and continues to perplex many still—the question whether the laws of beauty *are* eternal; or, in other words, what is beauty? Have we any standard beyond the judgment of the individual, or, at the best, the judgment of the majority? If not, we cannot gainsay the tendency of our youth to prefer a comic song to the tragedy of Lear, nor contradict the opinion of the sportsman, who thinks a picture of a man in red jumping over a gate more beautiful than the Virgin of the Rocks, nor the opinion of the Englishman who finds more in a glib waltz than in a Beethoven sonata. As the question takes us at once down to the very depths of metaphysics, and involves theories on the immortality of the soul and other abstruse subjects, it would be out of place to consider it further here. It is enough to remember that some of our wisest men have thought, and still do think, that Lear and the Virgin of the Rocks and the Beethoven sonata would eternally remain the more beautiful, though the whole world was populated by the youth of the music hall, by sportsmen, or Englishmen, as the case might be.¹

Herder saw this difficulty clearly enough, and constantly refers to it in the *Kalligone* as an objection to Kant's theory of æsthetics, which, denying the possibility of persuasion by abstract argument on the question of beauty, postulated a certain agreement that might be looked for in all noble minds that were not warped by convention and evil ways.² But Herder himself did not escape; he has even less basis for criticism, for he does not take into account the character of the subject, but lays his foundation on the sand of the hedonistic theory, which gives no hold whatever. For our typical Englishman might say,

¹ Happily this ghastly supposition is impossible, and, for the same reason that makes it impossible, beauty is safe. We are learning more and more clearly that everything, however common and unclean, has a right to survive as long as it can; but we are also learning that what is common and unclean has no chance in the end against the higher forms of beauty, which are thus by the very nature of man inevitable and eternal.

² See Professor Wallace's short account of the *Kritik of Judgment*. Kant, p. 195

“Pleasure, according to Herder and Spinoza, is that which extends my existence; pain is that which limits my existence. Now I feel that my existence is extended by the tune ‘My Queen,’ but sadly limited by a Beethoven sonata, for involuntary sleep and boredom are both limitations; therefore, to me the one is more beautiful than the other; it may not be so to every one, but that is no concern of mine; if all the world were like me, or if all the world were like my German friend who prefers the other thing, we might begin to talk about the absolutely beautiful; but at present there is no such thing, and it is absurd to talk of one thing being more beautiful than another, except in so far as it pleases us, or what we suppose to be the majority of mankind.” This negation of all possible basis for criticism follows immediately from the hedonistic principle which Herder really adopted, though his sense of beauty prevented him from working entirely upon it. The same position is, I believe, maintained by most of our modern men of science, so that I suppose it to be impregnable from the physiological side; and if we were not obliged to contradict it, or at least to imagine something further, every time we try to rise above the likes and dislikes of everyday life it would recommend itself for its simplicity and for delivering us from an amount of high-sounding cant that is generally its alternative.

But fortunately here again, when we come to more particular and tangible questions, it seems to make very little difference whether a man believes in ideal laws of absolute beauty or denies the possibility of philosophy and the existence of beauty altogether, provided his sense of the beautiful be innate and true. In a man like Herder we must not expect rigid consistency and deductive reasoning. He seems often to work from principles which would lead to the denial of all absolute laws of beauty, as indeed was but natural in an age which, after pursuing beauty through a course of years, ended by doubting its existence; just as the age which has pursued happiness as our being’s end and aim for a course of years now supposes that it has discovered pessimism to be the only wear. And yet at the same

time Herder's sense of the beautiful was often singularly true; or, if we are forbidden to say that such a thing can be true because it does not represent some actual fact, we will say that it was often singularly modern and opposed to the pseudo-classicism with which he was surrounded. Of his youthful rebellion against the dull and commonplace theories of eighteenth-century poetry and art, I have already spoken briefly; it remains to observe his efforts in manhood to carry forward the work he had begun. And I will begin with art, for his services to art have been generally overlooked.

Scattered throughout most of Herder's critical and historical works may be found very suggestive hints on art, especially on the history of art. As an example of such we might take a piece of verse called *Pygmalion* (*Adrastea*, 1801-3), which describes the annoyance of the old gods on returning to their temples and sweet haunts in Rome and Hellas and finding them all transformed to museums.¹ This might be called the precursor of that spirit of despairing regret which is always lamenting that we were not born two thousand years ago; the spirit which has found deathless expression in choruses from *Hellas*, and in the perfect words of Keats, in *Last Oracles*, and Heine's lovely dreams of Gods in Exile.² But when he is at his best no one is more aware of the time of day than Herder. Fully recognising the beauty of the past, as seen through the halo of death, and the present's ungainliness and dull oppression, he perceived at once the sorrow and the vanity of all this mourning for the golden years. Except in moments of depres-

¹ Something like Chaucer's gods when the woods were felled to make Arcite's pyre:

"Ne how the goddes rannen up and down
Disherited of hir habitatioun,
In which they woneden in rest and pees,
Nimphes, Faunes, and Amadriades."

THE KNIGHTES TALE.

² Strange as the assertion may appear, there is often a very close connection between Heine and Herder, especially in the history of thought and art. Again and again Heine seems to have taken Herder's idea and transfused it, till it glows and vibrates, with the soul of a poet and the wit of a Heine.

sion and melancholy fear—that is to say, except when he was not at his best—Herder had clear eyes to see that the world was still new. “A man of genius,” he exclaims, “will make new pictures even when the objects have been seen and sung a thousand times, for he sees them with his own eyes, and, the truer he remains to himself, with the greater originality will he put them together.” And again: “We must live and work in our own time or posterity will stand astonished at the pitiful insanity of men who tried to change their climate, their time, and their race.” It may be said that we have needed the warning in the last few years at least as much as it was needed a century back; but it might be more profitable, instead of uttering good advice, to consider what this regretful yearning for the old classic life so sharply contrasted with our surroundings really means, as being itself a part of our history. It may be that in our present state it is impossible for the arts of sculpture, painting, and poetry to tell us anything else. It may be that our highest ground for noble emotions—in painting, for instance—must be to know the kind of sponge with which Pompeian mothers used to wash their babies, and the kind of flute into which the dancing-girls of the Empire breathed the gaiety of despair. If this is so, we must boldly confess it for the sake of posterity; for even we shall be interesting historically, and it will also be of interest to ourselves to see whither such things will lead us.

But a man like Herder is not always inclined to look at the matter in this calm and historical way, and his great service to art was due to the fervour with which he joined in the effort—it might almost be said led the effort—to free her from the trammels of a frigid classicism, which had not even the merit of the realism that has now been infused into the classic history by the example of the Pre-Raphaelites and the general tone of modern thought.

Greek art, he said, must not be taken as an eternal model; it is perfect in itself, but for that very reason all modern imitations must be false; for the architecture and sculpture of men must spring from their way of

thought and life. In this sense there is no fixed ideal of art ; and “ to the man who limits himself to one period of art, be it France or Greece, the ideal that extends over all peoples and times must remain for ever unknown and strange.”

Following out these principles Herder was one of the very first to draw attention to the beauty and sincerity of the mediæval painters and the mediæval architecture, as well Flemish and German as Italian. In the next chapter but one we shall see his admiration of Dürer on his first visit to Nuremburg ; and Dürer, who must be classed with the mediæval artists, had hitherto been almost ignored by the learned and the “ men of taste ” in Germany. In all this it may be seen how much more modern Herder’s aspect of art was than was Goethe’s in the latter part of his life ; and by the modern aspect I mean the general tendency of the last thirty or forty years as represented chiefly by Mr. Ruskin and the so-called Pre-Raphaelites. In this sense we may include the most recent form of classical revival on account of the generally strict naturalism of the school. In some of his later writings it is true (for instance, in the *Letters for the Furtherance of Humanity*), Herder is inclined to insist too strongly on the life-giving power infused into art by that revival of classical knowledge at the end of the fifteenth century, which, together with countless other causes, went to make up the movement of the Renaissance. He forgets that this bright age of some fifty years of glorious life was followed by three centuries of almost unbroken sickness and death ; and that one of the chief germs of the sickness, though there were many others, was this self-same revival of classical knowledge. But in his best works, and generally throughout, Herder does not suffer himself to be led away by any excessive admiration for one particular development of art from the contemplation and recognition of true art as a whole, under whatever form and in whatever place it may appear.

Of Herder’s writings especially devoted to art the two best are the work on plastic art (*Plastik*, 1778) and the treatise first published in the *Miscellanies* of 1786, called by the same name

as Lessing's *How the Ancients represented Death*. Both are criticisms on Lessing, and in both Herder has caught something of Lessing's style; for he is clear and to the point, and free from those digressions and intervals of dullness which in Herder's work too often tempt the unwary reader to skip. Of the two the *Plastik* is the more suggestive; and, indeed, it opened a new vista in art-criticism and went far to establish a new law of art. In reading the *Laocoon* Herder had noticed with surprise, as every modern reader must notice, that Lessing had not thought it worth while to make any real distinction between sculpture and painting, but had been content to class them under one common term as opposed to poetry. In his *Plastik* Herder tries to establish the laws of this distinction. He is feeling after the law of limitation in sculpture resulting from its completeness, and he perceives, though he does not adequately explain, the different degree of emotion and imagination with which painting must be contemplated. The distinction has become singularly prominent and important of late years;¹ some, indeed, have been pleased to discourse upon it in subdued tones of almost religious mysticism; but in Herder's time it was completely unknown or overlooked.

The difference in purpose and result which separates the sculptor's and the painter's arts seems to be mainly, if not entirely, due to the difference of the material through which each has to express his thoughts; marble being suited for definite forms of completeness—the smooth, gleaming limbs of gods and heroes, the broad and flowing lines of antique drapery, the solid masses of hair, which scorn exactness of imitation; in a word, as Heine says, the forms with which the idea is co-extensive. Whereas colour and the flat canvas, without caring for exact imitation either, admit of the subtle lines of portraiture, vague hints and suggestions of delicate colour, lurking places of darkness, far-off tracts of vanishing distance, and spaces of acknowledged incompleteness, where the imagination may work its will;

¹ See Mr. Browning's poem on *Old Masters at Florence*, and Mr. Ruskin *passim*, especially the *Edinburgh Lectures*; also Mr. Pater's *Renaissance*.

for here, too, the weak wins, by reason of what is aspired to be and is not. But this explanation was a great deal too simple, and looked too unphilosophic for the German mind of the young Herder, joyfully beginning to feel his way along the lines of the philosophy of sensation then in vogue. He saw clearly enough that the provinces of the two arts were distinct, that we cannot expect the same results, nor treat the same subject in sculpture as in painting. What then was the cause that lay at the root of the difference? We have seen that he answered the question to his own satisfaction one day as he was wandering in the gardens of Versailles. Poetry and music are for the ear, painting for the eye; sculpture is a distinct art, therefore it must be judged by a separate sense; it obviously does not appeal to the taste nor smell—therefore it is left that it appeals to the touch. The argument looks straightforward enough, and yet the conclusion is false, or at all events so much exaggerated as to give an entirely false impression to the incautious. If we follow his arguments a little further, we shall see that the false step in the process was the supposition that sculpture, being a distinct art, must appeal to a separate sense.

At the time when the idea first struck him Herder was much interested in Diderot's experiments on the blind; and, during the eight years in which he was collecting materials for the work, he was also under the influence of Berkeley's *New Theory of Vision*. The two together had conclusively proved that the eye presents us merely with a flat, coloured surface, and that we only acquire a conception of distance or space by touch, and then by imperceptible inferences from repeated experience of certain angles and lines and shades of colour. Thus Diderot's blind man, who suddenly gained his sight, thought that what he saw was a flat surface which struck his eye—and supposed, therefore, that sight was a kind of touch; and in this time has shown that he was perfectly right, if, as we are told, all the senses are but forms of motion, that is, of impact or touch. Now, thought Herder, a picture is a flat, coloured surface, precisely similar to the flat, coloured surface which is all that is presented to us by the eye, independently of touch; therefore a

picture appeals to the eye alone; but sculpture, which deals with solids and implies intervals of space, can only be recognised as solid by the touch, and therefore appeals to the touch alone. He is obviously wrong in both conclusions; but it is worth while to see where the fallacy lies, because the former of the two mistakes has been recently dished up for our amusement by the school, if school it can be called, which opines that a painting should only be a flat, coloured surface without form, and therefore necessarily void; for colour without form, if it were possible, would be chaos. But it is impossible, for chaos cannot exist before the eyes of man; it is only possible where there is no intelligence to give it form.

The fact is, the senses of sight and touch have become by long experience so closely connected that it is almost impossible for any one who has both to use one without calling in the other; least of all is it possible to use sight without touch, or the inferences we have unconsciously drawn from touch, that is, our perception of distance. Every one necessarily acquires the conception of limitation; in other words, space is a necessary form of thought—for space and form are the same thing, or, at all events, they are inseparable. And we talk of “infinite space” either by a mistake or a convenient metaphor; for, though we cannot conceive a limit to space, neither can we conceive space without limit. When, therefore, we look at a picture in which something is represented (and if nothing is represented, as in a Turkey carpet and some few kinds of illumination, it is an abuse of terms to call it a picture, though even in these we do not get rid of form)—when we look at a picture we unconsciously draw all those inferences concerning space and solidity from our sense of touch which we draw in ordinary life when we are dealing with what is really solid and distant. Only, as no great painter will try to beguile us with a semblance of reality, we accept the convention, and, if need be, summon our imagination to suggest the inferences of distance which, if we were really contemplating solids, would suggest themselves. Indeed, the whole art of painting presupposes acquiescence in a convention and this effort of the imagination, which is generally unconscious or very

slightly felt; for it does not destroy the pleasure of our contemplation if we touch the picture and prove that it is really flat. But Herder is right in this—that in sculpture this call on the imagination is not so strong; the thing is solid, and we know that if we touched it we should find it occupying the amount of space it appears to occupy. But even thus, I doubt if the professed anatomist or the professed sculptor would gain a clear perception of the beauty of a statue if he were blind-folded and allowed to pass his hands over it; the ordinary layman would certainly not perceive its beauty with anything like the clearness that is given by a single glance. As has been already said, when we look at solids, or even flat representations of solids, we inevitably draw inferences of distance and space which originally are due to the sense of touch; but by touch alone we cannot call up an adequate image of a thing, partly for want of experience, partly because touch cannot suggest the play of light and colour. And, indeed, it would be a sufficient answer to Herder's theory to say that it is now generally agreed that the Greek statues were wholly or partially painted, or at least covered with an encaustic varnish which gave even the flesh a certain amount of colour, that would be imperceptible by touch alone. And when Herder says that we are restless whilst we are looking at a statue, because we wish to perceive its full beauty by touch, I think the statement is imaginary, and the reason little short of absurd—for it ought to apply to all beautiful things that are solid, and to all beautiful persons; whereas, after very early childhood, we are satisfied to contemplate such things by the sight alone; inferring their solidity, distance, and general form in the usual unconscious way, without any desire to touch them; or, if such desire exist, it is affectionate and emotional rather than purely æsthetic.¹

We must conclude, therefore, that Herder's first principle is false as a whole, though it contains a certain glimmering of truth. But, because his law is false, we must not, therefore, undervalue his services to art. His doctrines on the difference

¹ For a practical illustration of Herder's theory, see the fifth of Goethe's *Roman Elegies*.

in choice of subject and style of treatment, which is to be expected in sculpture and painting, are just, and would now be generally admitted. On the one hand they would save us from those nauseous pieces of trickery in marble, the veiled faces, the Parisian ladies in fashionable costumes, and the ladies, also distinctly Parisian, without costumes at all, that are the admiration of all who delight in trickery; for Herder established the law, that marble was only suited for the eternal form of man apart from all fleeting fashions and peculiarities. On the other hand, he did much to deliver the world from the frigid pseudo-classical kind of painting falsely called "ideal"; "that excessive tenderness," as he calls it, "that quality-like horror of the common, which in the end makes our earth as narrow as our parlour; and dries up the freshest, deepest springs of truth, of movement, and of power, till they become a dreary slough."

But his greatest service, after all, was that he endeavoured to advance landscape painting to the position which it has since occupied. In this attempt he was of course acting in direct opposition to Lessing, who thought that landscape was unsuited for representation, because it did not admit of an "ideal." But, says Herder, though darkness and sunrise, lightning and storm, brook and flame, are impossible in sculpture, because they could not be touched (in other words, because marble does not admit of such forms), yet they are suited to painting, which is like a fair dream compared to the definite truth of sculpture. "Some people think it ignoble," he goes on, "to represent the face of creation; just as if the heavens and earth were not better and more significant than the cripple who creeps between them, whose representation is considered the one and only subject worthy of painting."

These are the leading principles of this treatise; the remainder deals with the separate limits and features of a statue in succession, and with certain strictures and rules for sculpture derived from these principles, more directly interesting to the professed antiquary and sculptor than to us. This is true, also, of his shorter works on *Nemes's* and the *Representation of Death by the Ancients*, both published in the *Miscellanies* of

1786. As to the latter, Lessing, in his essay of the same name, had maintained that the Greeks figured death on their tombs as a blooming boy holding an inverted torch; but, said Herder, this figure cannot be death, for the Greeks regarded death as something horrible, and they were unwilling to represent the horrible at all; the boy is rather sleep, the brother of death. The distinction is not very important, for we may say that the sleep of death was intended, and that on a tomb the Greeks naturally liked to represent the death of their friends as a gentle sleep; or, it may be, that the boy is the Genius of the departed and has just sunk the torch of life. At all events, Heyne is no doubt right when he says that the little treatise is beautiful and suggestive, but whether Lessing would have been convinced is another matter; "for when Lessing once formed an opinion it was not his way to allow himself to be won over."¹ After stating his main position, Herder passes in review the other forms under which death and the soul were represented; Psyche with her butterfly wings, Zephyr visiting the dead, Charon in his boat, the dolphins and ships, the scenes from Hades, and the cheerful figures of swans, or storks, and flowers, and the Bacchic processions sweeping merrily along. But we may have to recur at times to Herder's views on art in later years, and we will now turn to another phase of the beautiful.

Of Herder's inestimable services to the poetry of his country so much has already been said that little more is needed here. We have seen that here he can only be compared with Wordsworth in England, or, to be more exact, he was the chief instrument in Germany of that glorious work which was wrought out in England by Cowper and Burns, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Byron. He smote the stony rock and the waters flowed. Seldom, I suppose, in the course of history has the fruit of wisdom and labour ripened so quickly. Within ten years, one might almost say within five years, after Herder had first spoken, the whole aspect of German literature had changed, and the whole

¹ Heyne's Preface in Müller's edition of Herder's works.

land was ringing with immortal songs. Herder saw of the labour of his soul, but he was not satisfied. And this was natural, for it is one of the hardest things to reverence co-equals in age or the generation that is arising to supplant us, as the buds push off the old leaves and make them wither. But those who were great and revered when we were young hang there like stars, gleaming on us from their vague and holy distance. We can hardly imagine that such men were limited in a body and had a back to their heads and a back to their lives any more than we can imagine the face on the other side of the moon. And this was the reason that even towards the very end of the century—twenty years and more after the revolution had begun—Herder stirred the wrath of Schiller by continuing to discourse on Kleist, Witthof, Uz, and others, now only memorable as the predecessors of the great German poets. In truth, it was much as though a contemporary of Shelley and Keats had continually harped on the merits and demerits of Young and Shenstone.

But, taking this natural prejudice into account, it must not, therefore, be thought that Herder was blind to the reviving beauty of his time, though he did not fully perceive the vastness of the difference that separated the new from the old. He recognised and encouraged every first trace of genius, especially of genius in poetry, which came under his notice; and we see this in the case not only of Goethe, but of Bürger, Voss, Schiller, and, in later days, of Jean Paul. His firm belief in the great truths of poetry never really changed or failed him, even though at times there seems to live a contradiction on the tongue; and, whenever he turned his eyes abroad or to distant times, where there was no prejudice to obscure his vision, his penetration is always singularly profound and his judgment discriminating. He had a very wide knowledge of European literature—Italian, French, and perhaps Spanish. But it was to England that he always looked with the greatest interest and affection, partly because she was the land of Shakespeare and Milton, partly because through England's help he had breathed the

spirit of life into the dry bones of Germany. He was intimately acquainted with all English literature of importance from Chaucer to Thomson; and whatever he says of it, especially when he speaks of its lyrical side and historical development, is always remarkably clear and suggestive. He is never tired of tracing its course from the age of fairy-tale and heroic narrative through the bright intermediate space of Spenser and Shakespeare to the age of speculation, of thought and learning and the period of sober prose. And here it is indeed sad to think how much Herder lost by dying. In the very year in which he published his most continuous account of English literature, Burns ceased to sing;¹ Cowper was four years from death; Byron was eight years old, and Shelley four; and two years later the *Lyrical Ballads* of Wordsworth and Coleridge appeared at Bristol; but to Herder all these were never to be so much as the shadows of names.

But in spite of his keen appreciation of the truly beautiful in poetry, of whatever nation and whatever time, Herder was always most at home in the East, both on account of his early training and the natural bent of his mind. No beauty came so near his heart as the poetry of the Hebrews. Here was the pure utterance of the soul—"a sigh of the soul," he calls it himself—here were no frigid conventions, no restrictions of thought by form. Amongst the Hebrews the true lyric—the reflection of the inmost soul, the purely subjective poetry, as some would call it—had reached its sublimest height; and Herder, as he himself used to say, was born at midnight, and therefore had a natural tendency to the sublime. We must remember that for all his classical learning, and even classical enthusiasm, and for all his love of the people's ballads and simple ways, he remained a Hebrew in heart.

When, therefore, he was at work on the *Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, he was justified in writing to Hamann that "from childhood he had nourished this book in his heart," and any one

¹ In the *Letters for the Furtherance of Humanity* (1793-97). The eighth series, which contains the account, was almost certainly written in 1796.

who has taken the trouble to look through this account of his life will have noticed how frequently this strong undercurrent of Hebraic sympathy appears on the surface. The first volume of this work on Hebrew poetry is written in the form of dialogue, which is happily dropped in the second volume. For, though Herder begins by stating that he uses this form for brevity and to avoid dogmatism, and with no intention of vying with Plato, yet Plato is inevitably suggested by a dialogue form, and it is impossible for any writer ever to gain by the comparison. The treatise on Solomon's love-songs, which I am inclined to think the best on the whole of all Herder's attempts at pure criticism on a particular poem, or rather series of poems—this, too, really forms part of the same work, and the three volumes taken together are a very beautiful and suggestive account of the Hebrew poets, from Lamech almost up to the time of the Prophets. Herder always intended to continue the work through the series of poets known as the Prophets to the Revelation; but, like so many of his schemes, this was thwarted by other cares and vexations, and the work remains a fragment. As usual, his main object throughout is to reveal the full beauty of the Hebrew poems, their depth of earnest thought, and at the same time their sweet simplicity, by stripping off the coverings of custom and the shrouds of dogma. For we know how sad a thing it is to hear modern men and women repeating the Songs of David, and talking about them, as if they were written by the pew-opener for the benefit of the congregation, and had some connection with the church-rates.

The commentary on the poem of the Creation is not so good in this latter form as in the earlier form when Herder was in Riga. The best parts of the work, as might be expected, are the accounts of the Book of Job, "that voice that speaks to us still over the space of four thousand years," the Love-songs of Solomon, and the Psalms, which Herder divides into periods, David's Psalms marking the culminating point of the best lyrical period of Hebrew poetry. The commentary or criticism is interspersed throughout with Herder's singularly beautiful trans-

lations from the Hebrew in a kind of free rhythm to imitate the original cadences. But we will here cease to criticise criticism, and pass to the more creative side of his work in the world.

Halfway between criticism and creation we come upon the collection of *Ballads and Songs of the People* (*Volkslieder*, published in two parts, 1778-9, afterwards gathered into one volume by Johann Müller under the title of *Voices of all Nations*). In this work Herder had in view exactly the same object as in his criticisms and translations of the early Hebrew poets. The idea was no doubt suggested by the publication of Percy's *Reliques* in 1765, and it may be noticed as curious that Percy wrote his commentary on the Song of Solomon the year before he published the *Reliques*, and that Herder's account of the same poem appeared at the same time as the first part of the *Volkslieder*. Looked at from the present time such coincidences show plainly enough which way the stream was running. Here and there a man appears who is sick to death of frigid elegance and faultless couplet, and has the courage to turn for healing to the untrammelled songs and unadorned ballads of a time when people lived and did not seem to live, and were poets without much talk of poetry. Such men often seem half afraid of their boldness. Percy introduced his *Reliques* with many an apology for their rudeness, and interspersed his priceless treasures with many specimens of worthless elegance, to make the volume palatable to readers of taste. During the very years which passed between the recall of Herder's first collection of *Volkslieder*, whilst at Bückeburg, and the final edition in 1779, the sweetest singer of the century, "whyles daez't wi' love, whyles daez't wi' drink," was just beginning to "rhyme for fun";¹

¹ "Some rhyme a neibor's name to lash;
Some rhyme (vain thought!) for needfu' cash;
Some rhyme to court the countra clash,
An' raise a din:
For me, an aim I never fash;
I rhyme for fun."

EPISTLE TO JAMES SMITH.

See also the third stanza below. It is hard to say whether Herder knew anything of Burns. In the collection of Herder's own poems there are three verses

and yet he "was not so presumptive as to imagine that he could make verses like printed ones composed by men who had Greek and Latin"; and it is pitiable to see his undoubtedly honest reverence and admiration for men who were not worthy to clean his plough. In the same way we have already seen that in his criticism Herder could not entirely free himself from the eighteenth-century canons of his youth, and we shall see that this is even more true of his own poetry; for, when we have been told all our life that this thing or the other is beautiful and true, we are only too likely to believe it, even in contradiction to our real insight into beauty and truth. It seems rather harsh and impertinent to give such things up altogether, and there may be some permanent beauty in them after all, which only a fool would seek to destroy. And this is one of the reasons why we so often find apparent contradictions in men like Herder. They recognise relics and traces of beauty with a more delicate eye than the rest of us, and they also know how vast is the power of a fool for a season. But, as far as the *Volkslieder* go, there is no tone of apology in Herder as there is in Percy, though in the preface he puts on the cloak of irony in respect for "correct" critics. There is nothing but praise and exultation in the Correspondence on Ossian and ancient poets, and in the treatise on the connection between the early poetry of Germany and England, which, together with the treatise on Shakespeare, serve as introduction to the book. I cannot but think that Herder would have done this piece of work, even if he had never heard of Percy, though undoubtedly, as it was, the idea was taken from him, as well as a large part of the material. But Herder expressly says that he had no intention of rivalling Percy. It was not his purpose to make a complete collection of German ballads, as was done some thirty years later by Arnim and Brentano in the *Wunderhorn*; he would

"from the Scotch," the first two of which are undoubtedly a reminiscence of John Anderson, and of Burns's version of the song. But, if he had really been acquainted with a poet so truly after his own heart, he would certainly have made more mention of him.

give specimens from the popular poetry of as many nations as he could, and display from this side the great unity of the human race in the midst of all difference. Gervinus laughs at his ambition, and no doubt is justified of his critical sneer; but simple people, who merely try to find the facts and general tendencies of things, will perceive that this attempt of Herder's was a new and important step towards that comparative method of investigating human history as a whole which is gradually becoming universal. It was impossible for Herder to limit himself to one country or one time; to him mankind was a vast brotherhood, almost a great individual; at all events, the divisions and differences were for the most part accidental, and to him time was as a continuous stream, in which we can cut no sharp lines for stages and periods. But while insisting on the historical or scientific interest of this book we must not forget its influence on poetry. It is really to the impulse which Herder gave to this form of poetry that we owe the immortal ballads of Bürger, Goethe, and Schiller—and in later years of Uhland and the Romantic School, which brings us to Heine himself. Therefore, if we merely take account of the ballads, without regarding the beautiful lyrics of natural and unconscious poetry which are included in the book, we must consider the *Volkslieder* translated and collected by Herder to have been the chief cause in Germany of the movement which was beginning in England at the same time, and was to produce its noblest fruits in the ballads of Coleridge and Rossetti. X ✓

We have seen that the idea of such a collection lay slowly developing in Herder's mind for many years before it was realised. During his travels after he had left Riga, and especially in the weary months at Strassburg, he had translated several ballads chiefly from the English and Scotch, and, above all, the songs of Shakespeare. In his preface he says that he did this merely for his own amusement with no intention of publication; but from a letter to Hamann, and from his request to Goethe to collect for him any ballads he might find still lingering in Elsass, it is evident that he did not intend to hide his light

under a bushel. When he was at Bückeburg, at all events, finding that his collection was now sufficient for a volume, he sent the ballads to the press, though, as we have seen, he recalled them in a fit of disgust.

The final edition, which was published after almost ten years' preparation, begins with some songs from the far north, a piteous dirge from Greenland, and the Laplander's songs to his reindeer as he flies over the frozen snow to his beloved's home. Then follow a considerable number, chiefly marriage-songs, from the Baltic provinces, one from Tartary, and some tales from the Morlack tribes, one of which was translated by Goethe. The songs and ballads of uncultured nations such as these, who chatter like swallows in an unknown tongue, Herder derived for the most part from books of travel, such as Scheffer's *Laponia*, and they are therefore sometimes translations of translations, and have probably lost something by the way. Now no one was better aware of the difficulties and danger, or more properly the impossibility, of translating poetry than Herder himself; we have seen that in his earlier writings, such as the *Fragments*, one of his main principles was that in true poetry the thought and the form are inseparable, being strictly one and the same, and hence that the fashionable imitations and translations were vain.¹ It is curious, therefore, and rather sad, to observe that Herder himself was one of the best translators of poetry that the world has seen. Judging him, as I only have a right to judge him, from his versions of the English and Scotch ballads, and of Shakespeare's songs, I believe for his skill in this art he may be placed by the side of Shelley, and, I suppose, the translator of Omar. This skill is no doubt partly due to his knowledge of the essential weakness of this art, but it chiefly arises from that power of universal sympathy by which he was enabled to become for the time a member of any nation in any period of the world's history.

After the cries of the uncouth nations of the North, the second

¹ And yet modern Germans have indignantly assured me that Shakespeare is much better in German than in English.

book, containing songs from the South, begins with a few translations of Greek lyrics, introduced—as Herder, partly in irony, has written—“to comfort tender Greek souls for the barbarism of the rest.” Then comes one of the marriage-songs of Catullus, and a few songs of Sicily and Italy, followed by several ballads of Spain and France. The third book is devoted to England and Scotland, and begins, *alas!* with Ossian. Most of the ballads, such as *Sir Patrick Spens*, *The Nutbrown Maid*, *Edward*, and *Chevy Chase*, are taken from the *Reliques*, but some also from Ramsay’s *Evergreen*, and other collections. The ballads are followed by several of Shakespeare’s songs and parts of the dialogue, and there are a few more modern poems of Lovelace and Wither, and even Shenstone. In the fourth book come the ballads and shrill war-songs of old Norsemen, of Sweden and the Danes, full of strange stories of Odin and the Valkyriur, Balder and the other weird shadows of northern myth. The fifth book is entirely German, and begins with the story of King Ludwig, the great-uncle of Charlemagne, who by the aid of God smote the heathen Normannen. Johann Müller dates the ballad 882, and it is said to be the oldest German song. After this come a few old war-songs and several ballads well known in the *Wunderhorn*, together with some of the most beautiful lyrics in any language, such as the earliest form of *Röslein auf der Heiden* and *Wenn ich ein Vöglein wär*. Several of Simon Dach’s poems are also included, perhaps with a touch of patriotic prejudice for the old Mohrungeu country, and there is one of Claudius’s poems and Goethe’s *Fisher*, just to show what the moderns could do—for the spirit-world is never barred; our sense is shut, our hearts are dead.¹ The sixth and last book contains the “songs of savages,” chiefly from the Madagascan through the French of the traveller Parry. These are laments for the dead, descriptions of natural pleasures, or the rage and jealousy of savages, and, above all, hatred and fear of the white man and slavery. Then follow two songs from the Peruvian,

¹ “Die Geisterwelt ist nicht verschlossen :

Dein Sinn ist zu, dein Herz ist todt !”—FAUST.

one of which may appear in translation probably three times removed, thus :

Sleep, O sleep, my maiden,
Softly to my strain ;
In the midnight, maiden,
Wake and list again.

and with this simplest of serenades the book ends.

On the whole I am inclined to consider it the most perfect, though by that I do not mean the most important, of all Herder's pieces of work, and I imagine that when he came to die it would be on this that he would look back with most unmixed satisfaction.

A great many of Herder's later works may be really regarded as continuations or supplements of the *Volkslieder*, though with a few exceptions they are wanting in the true swing and simplicity of the ballad and national lyric. In 1785 he published a long series of translations from the Greek anthology, and he has also left several versions of the Roman poems. In these he has tried to preserve the original metres, and it may be said that in the case of translations the experiment is more allowable ; though, had not both Goethe and Schiller as well as Herder used these classical metres constantly, for what they supposed to be their most important original poems, I should have said that any one who had ears to hear would have fled from the sound of them. As it is, I could not be so " presumptive " as to say that three such men were wrong ; and yet, if I had to state what I personally most regretted in the writings of them all, this employment of classical metres in a modern tongue would be the first point I should choose.

But, leaving this question to men of critical knowledge, we may observe that in later life Herder inclined more and more to oriental literature ; and, indeed, we have seen throughout that orientalism had a strange fascination on his mind, in spite, and partly because, of his strength of Teutonic enthusiasm. In his *Miscellanies* of 1787 he published a series of oriental stories, derived chiefly from the Hebrew history, which he afterwards

called *Pages of the Days of Old*. A few years later he translated parts of the *Valley of Roses*, probably through the French from the Persian of Sadi ; and, in after-life, several stories from the Chinese, also through the French, together with some sayings and verses of Brahmin philosophy and poetry. In a series of letters he joined Goethe in his admiration for the Indian drama, *Sákoontalá, or the Lost Ring*, by Kalidas, which had been recently translated into Latin and English by Sir William Jones, and from his English into German by Herder's friend Forster, who had added notes, especially on the natural history, from his own wide knowledge of the earth's face and the ways of men. In all this we see signs of the beginnings of that interest in Eastern traditions, and poetry, and life, which in time became a great movement, and found expression in Goethe's *Divan*, in Rückert, in Byron and Moore, in sweet hints and dream-like echoes of Heine, and in countless pantomimes, till at last the whole thing is almost more nauseous than the knights in armour and the moon-lit castles of dying romance ; for these at least are flesh of our flesh. Herder's translations from the Latin of Balde, the German seventeenth-century poet, and his version of the Cid legends, will be best mentioned in their chronological place, for they are not so important as they were once considered.

And now we must turn to the saddest part of the whole story, and, as it is the saddest, it shall be but for a moment ; indeed, that we consider it at all seems to need some apology to Herder's memory, for he repeatedly confessed that he was not a poet, and comparatively few of his original verses were published by himself. And yet this man, who revolutionised the literature of his country, who found it a dreary wilderness of shallow phrase and frigid imitation, and left it as one of the six or seven greatest literatures the world has ever known,—surely we might have expected that such an one could himself produce something. And, if we find that he could not thus create, I believe I have a right to say that this is the saddest thing in his history. If he could have produced one supreme poem, even one perfect song

that would have echoed down the ages, ill-health, the loss of friends, the rancour of enemies, death itself, all these would have been as nothing to him. The earnest desire of all such men—I had almost said of all men—is to express their inmost soul under some immortal form of art; they must create, and, failing this, what shall it profit them if they gain the whole world? To take an instance from a parallel art to poetry: there have been great musical performers, who, with all their fame, and wealth, and wondrous skill to interpret the works of the masters, have yet retained so gloomy and melancholic a temper as to give rise to stories about blighted affections, compacts with the devil, domestic afflictions, and what not beside. Yet I can imagine that in truth, even if these things were so, they were as nothing to the one sorrow, that they had been unable to compose so much as a single line of music which would be known fifty years after their death, except by the curious. Or, as an instance still more nearly parallel, we have seen that Carlyle tried to write poems, and I have heard that amongst his papers were found a very great number of verses. And yet Carlyle's spirit was always creative; at least two of his works are amongst the rarest kind of creations—creations in prose. But still he could not be content with prose, but was irresistibly driven to find his soul's expression under a truer and more distinctive form of art. In Emerson we see the same sad endeavour. For between the best prose and even the lowest kind of true poetry there is a great gulf fixed, and we may almost say that of those who travail with their speech the poets only are immortal (or must we add Plato and a few other humourists?). To quote or misquote the Roman writer—who, strangely enough, has hitherto been kept alive mostly by schoolmasters—"the Muse forbids to die," and Herder knew as well as any one that it is the Muse alone.

For a man who knows this there are two things possible: either himself to create, to produce under some eternal form of art, and thus to make his life one triumphant pæan, in spite of all misery or misfortune; or, recognising his impotence, to go sternly on his way, doing what yet he can, joining in the

triumphs of others, and boldly accepting the complete unimportance of his own individual success or failure, happiness or misery, immortality or non-existence. I can imagine no third course that would not both ruin the man and make his life unbearable to himself and an annoyance to others. Now there can be no doubt that Herder was firmly purposed to follow the second of these two lines, knowing that the other was impossible for him; he would not allow himself to be blinded to the merits of others by his own failure, as so many are blinded. It is true that he sometimes seems rather harsh and bitter in criticism of his friends, especially of Goethe; but in this, after long study of his character, I cannot believe that he was influenced by envy, as some have said, but by a desire to give his true opinion, and, after all, sincerity is the first necessity of criticism. Besides, it requires rare skill to praise honestly without an appearance of flattery, and to avoid flattery a man like Herder will always err on the other side. It is wiser, therefore, not to join in the sneer that in his letters he generally uses quotations from other poets to express his feelings, rather than writing poems for himself, as Goethe would have done; knowing how much he could do, and at the same time how little, we should rather admire his courage and self-restraint. And yet at times the old sigh could not but come back: what if, after all, he were a poet? Therefore, he never entirely abandoned the effort.

And, besides, there is another slightly different aspect of poetry which should make one all the more loath to say anything harsh against the poems of Herder, or indeed of any other man who does not flaunt himself. Karoline tells us that, in the midst of troubles, these poems were often his best or only consolation, and that they never failed to deliver him from depression and send him out to face the world once more with cheerful look. This strange power of man to free the spirit by casting its sorrows and passions into an external form of art has become generally known through Goethe's works; for he stated it, and was peculiarly successful in its application, though indeed the first of poets or artists was its inventor. As far as I can gather,

if the effort be strong, it is generally attended with, at all events, partial success ; and, though it may be objected that it makes the man callous, hard-hearted, and indifferent to sorrow, yet, after all, hard-hearted towards himself and indifferent to his own sorrow is just what a man ought to be, and a little hardening will do no harm to any who are likely to try the method ; for they too have to live in this world of limitation. If we remember then that Herder's chief object in writing these poems was to attain this freedom of spirit, and that he himself published very little of his poetry to the world, criticism is obviously disarmed.

After this needful preface we may glance at the poems or verses themselves, and we shall find that Herder attempted nearly every kind of poetry—every kind, I suppose, except the epic. In the ordinary edition of his works (the Müllers' edition) the poems are collected and arranged with singular want of judgment ; several of the poems occur twice, and some that really belong to Goethe, Schiller, or Knebel, are included. In his youth we have seen that Herder was naturally led to imitate the too-often common-place moralities of Pope, Haller, and Witthof, as well as the odes and dithyrambs of Klopstock, Gleim, Uz, and Weisse ; and throughout life he never quite overcame this tendency to the didactic in poetry. At first-sight this seems strange, for the whole force of his criticism was against it ; but we have so often seen a poet overthrow his own poetry by his own criticism that we should no longer be surprised, remembering the subtle saying of Emerson : “ Tell me what a man praises, and I will tell you what he has not got.” The same may be said of the continual allegory of Herder's poems ; the frigid personification, the wearisome mythology, the abstractions of virtues and vices with capital letters to their unreal names. The man who was one of the first to proclaim humanity, and nature, and truth in poetry, is himself hardly ever human, or natural, or true. His poems are often shrewd ; one or two, especially those on God, and nature, and personality, may even be called philosophically profound, and there is no lack of sensible good advice ; but they never move the soul to tears or laughter, they

never give us a glimpse of that poet's world of love, and beauty, and delight, of which there is no death nor change. When he writes for women, for instance, he bids them be natural in youth and afterwards become good housewives, and the picture suggested throughout is of the woman mending her husband's socks, seeing that his dinner is decent, and looking after the nursery; a very high, and difficult, and necessary ideal, no doubt, but somehow falling short of the true revelation of poetry when thus barely set down, unless, indeed, the poets have beguiled us all along. And yet, from the example of all true poets, we may infer that if a man is capable of poetry at all he is capable of poetry on woman.

Another mark of the true poet, with very few though brilliant exceptions, such as Chaucer,¹ is that he should be able to write a real song or lyric, with music in itself, which is the highest kind, or, at all events, admitting of music. Of Herder's lyrics at least four—sometimes, though accidentally, printed together, namely, *The Heart of Man* (*Das menschliche Herz*), *The Moment* (*Der Augenblick*), *Lament in Loneliness* (*Des einsamen Klage*), and *Expectation* (*Erwartung*)—come so near, so very near, the true thing, that I believe most people would call them poems; and if I asserted that Herder was a poet I should base the assertion on these. For the benefit of the English reader I have ventured to translate the first of the four, not that it is the best, for the two last are better, but that it is the least spoilt by my translation. And yet I have been unable to preserve the beautiful two-syllable rhymes of the original, in which German is so rich and English so poor or ungainly in comparison, even in the hands of a master; and, at the best, all translation of poetry is a sorry thing.

Once at a loom were working
The gods of joy and grief,
Ceaseless the shuttle plying
The heart of man to weave;

¹ It may be said that sometimes even Chaucer is truly lyrical, as when he turns round as it were, and addresses us or his characters in his own person; but there is a difference between this and the true lyric or passionate song.

O poor sad heart enwoven
 Of joy and sorrowing,
 Ah dost thou know what life is?
 A glad or woeful thing?
 And there stood Love's own goddess,
 And sorrowed for its sake:
 "O doubtful was the labour,
 That this poor heart did make.
 Its bliss shall be in yearning,
 And longing all its gain,
 And even tears of pleasure
 Be harbingers of pain."
 Her child, the boy of beauty,
 Came quickly with his dart;
 "See now my best of blessings
 I here to thee impart.
 An ever-onward striving
 Shall love to thee remain,
 And love shall be thy living,
 And joy be all thy pain."

In which, if we must criticise, it will be plain that the last verse does not ring quite true; for it may happen that even the pain of love is not joy, and Goethe would not have stepped aside from the truth in order to finish with an epigrammatic piece of consolation. The "dart," too, will justly have made the modern reader shudder; but, alas! around Herder's heart the chill shroud of the eighteenth century still hung heavily, and could not be shaken off.

I will dare to give a version of yet one more of Herder's lyrics, because it has received the glory of being set to music by Beethoven himself. The idea is from the Arabian, but to me the beauty of the thought is spoilt by being cast in the elegiac metre, which I do not care to reproduce.

O turtle-dove, that mournest ceaselessly,
 And from my weary eyes hast driven sleep,
 O turtle-dove, sleepless I mourn with thee,
 But in my heart must I my sorrow keep.
 Ah! cruel is the lot love gave to me,
 While thou canst mourn, my woe is dumb as deep.

Herder's ballads or imitations of ballads are not so successful as his lyrics. Traces of Herder himself and of eighteenth-century thought constantly appear and ruin all ; this is the more strange because, as has been said, when he was dealing with history or the productions of others he could enter at will into complete sympathy with any time and any people—so different a thing is creation from understanding. Thus, with all his admiration for Shakespeare and his love of the drama, Herder was peculiarly deficient in dramatic power. His six or seven attempts at drama, such as his *Prometheus*, his *Brutus*, and his *Ariadne*, are revivals of Greek or Roman legends and history according to the Greek model ; and in consequence, as he himself pointed out time after time in the case of others, they are neither Greek nor German, but have gone to share the fate of nearly all such imitations ; though sometimes this fate is warded off, at least for a time, by the genius of a true poet.¹

Of Herder's purely didactic poems I am unqualified to speak ; for, after long effort, the phrase didactic poem—by which I mean a poem inculcating morality, not a poem revealing new truths of life—remains to me simply a contradiction of terms ; nor can I imagine any frame of mind in which a strictly didactic poem, in the ordinary sense of the words, could suggest to me by the imagination any 'noble grounds for noble emotions.'² Such verses may interest me scientifically, but there is no emotion, no suggestion, no imagination. But, allowing that this is due to a want of moral enthusiasm, we may at all events say that a didactic poem cannot be immortal merely because it is didactic ; for the fashion of such things changes, and knowledge in every form is progressive. Thus, no one now goes to Pope's *Essay* for his philosophy, nor to Young's *Night Thoughts* for his morality, though such theories and maxims will always be interesting to the historian and scientific inquirer.

Closely connected with didactic verse, though even less

¹ As in Goethe's *Iphigenie* and Mr. Swinburne's *Atalanta*, the latter of which at least will surely live for some years yet.

² See Mr. Ruskin's definition of poetry, *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. p. 11.

deserving the high name of poetry, comes the kind of composition which deals in fables, allegories, parables, modern instances of old proverbs, and, finally, epigrams. Herder was much attracted by this form, and it was perhaps here that his real strength in verse lay. To this class belong his verses on politics, his satires against contemporary philosophy and pedantic theologians, his adaptations of Greek mythology, and the new turns he gives to old stories and fables. As an instance of the transition from the true lyric to this lower form of verse the following will serve; and here translation becomes bearable, for the nearer we approach the grotesque the less important does perfection of form appear :

O wise men with the wondrous skill
 To set the spheres in motion,
 Give to a wearied heart one thrill,
 One spark of new emotion;
 Ah, but one drop of life-blood still
 From youth-restoring potion—
 I'd gladly leave you all your skill
 To set the spheres in motion.

In certain moods the verse is true; it at once suggests the beginning of *Faust*, and will be seen to be significant of much when we reach the later years of Herder's life. But if any one, therefore, thinks that Herder would have considered the prolongation of the hebetated existence of Liverpool merchants by "nervous excitement" a worthy aim for the cultivation of wisdom, I believe he would be wrong.¹

As a more exact example of this kind, here is a stroke of satire against philosophic opponents, probably of the Kantian school :

Who, when the midday sun is high,
 Will join thereto his candle's light,
 Must thank himself accordingly
 If candle fails him in the night.
 O philosopher, that dost to other worlds aspire,
 But in thine own art sunk in depths of dreary mire,
 Methinks behind thy forehead glows most wondrous fire.

¹ Emerson tells us that on certain subjects we cannot allow a doctor to speak. But when a man who was a poet speaks thus (in irony, one can hope), what shall we say?

This seems good enough for its purpose, though the parable and its application are not exactly parallel ; and, for my part, sympathy is very strongly on the side of the poor celestial philosopher sunk so deep in this terrestrial quagmire. But this kind of satire was a favourite device with the great men of the time, and reaches its highest development in Schiller's contributions to the *Xenien*. Another favourite form of wit was the short epigram and the rhymed proverb with a pregnant meaning, such as Herder's couplet—

Think not the smallest bush, because 'tis small, is bare.
How if a tiger should be lurking there?

The idea is borrowed from an oriental proverb, but the sudden flash of the second line is very vivid, and true besides, as the hectoring traveller often finds when he ventures too near some demure-looking man or woman, and by one swift blow of irony, that needs no second, is stretched amongst the dead. But it will be said that I am wandering from the beautiful, and that is true. To make an end, therefore : it seems impossible that any one who loved poetry, and had read Herder's attempts at poetry, should be anxious to claim for him a place amongst the poets. The title of poet is far too great a thing to be given lightly. Esteeming, as I do, every true poem to be above praise, above price, above all measure or idea of value, I cannot help looking with suspicion on criticisms which contrast one true poem with another, and say this is better than that; for every true poem is in its kind invaluable, and is, therefore, raised beyond the reach of comparison or contrast. Or, to take familiar instances, we cannot say that Shakespeare's "Where the bee sucks" is better or worse than Keats's "Shed no tear, oh! shed no tear," or than Goethe's "Ueber allen Gipfeln ist Ruh," or than Heine's "Du bist wie eine Blume," for all of these are perfect. But below these comes the great mass of compositions in verse and metre of every order of worthlessness, and also of merit except the highest, which cannot be expressed. The only office of comparative criticism, therefore, is to say which belong to this highest class, and are worthy to be called poems. Into this

supreme rank of poets Herder could not enter, nor did he claim entrance.

If any further explanation of this is necessary, than merely that he was not a poet, I refer back to Mr. Ruskin's definition of poetry, which is sufficient here, though it is intentionally made to include all true art, whereby it appears to me that some unnecessary confusion is caused; for, after all, we write English, or at least try to write English, and not Greek (and even the Greeks would have used music, not poetry, as the comprehensive term). Poetry, says Mr. Ruskin, is "the suggestion by the imagination of noble grounds for the noble emotions," and by the noble emotions he means "the four principal sacred passions—Love, Veneration, Admiration, Joy; and their opposites—Hatred, Indignation (or Scorn), Horror, and Grief."¹ Applying this definition to Herder's verses, and knowing that Mr. Ruskin is the man to mean what he says and to use no word in vain, I should insist most strongly on the words "suggestion" and "suggestion by the imagination." The noble emotions are sometimes there, the noble grounds are sometimes there, but Herder has not the poet's truly magic and inexplicable art to cause them to be suggested by the imagination. The general tone of his attempts at poetry may also serve as an instance of "the failure of the ideal that leaves out the shadows." Attempts after such an ideal, says Mr. Ruskin again, "are always soothing and pathetic; never sublime nor perfectly beautiful."² Herder himself revealed the same error in Klopstock, in Gessner, and many another gentle writer. He saved others, himself he could not save. And yet he gets so near, so very, very near; and there is the sorrow of it.

¹ *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. p. 11.

² *Ibid.* vol. iii. p. 77.

CHAPTER XV.

THE COMPLETE.

"Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow to clear.

Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of the weal and woe."

ABT VOGLER.

"That low man goes on adding one to one,

His hundred's soon hit;

This high man aiming at a million,

Misses a unit."—A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL.

IN an attempt to give an account of Herder's work in this world, or of his position in the history of thought, the great difficulty is to draw sharp lines, to make any distinctions that will allow the reader a breathing space, to avoid repeating the same truth without end, though in different words and with different lights. As I have said before, Herder's separate works are but parts of one greater work, which may be called a Criticism of History, or a Study of Time, according to pleasure; and the key to this Criticism may in like manner be called the Unity of Nature in her infinite development, the Continuity of Phenomena, or the necessary self-existence of God, not so much revealed in his works as indwelling under the form of the universe. It is this key or central idea which I wish to make the subject of the present chapter; but, because the idea is central, it of necessity follows that much which might be said concerning it has been anticipated by what has gone before; indeed, unless I have insisted throughout that each part of Herder's manifold work in life owed its main significance to his extraordinary insight into this truth, I have missed the meaning of his life. Herder approached it and endeavoured to proclaim it from the side of poetry and from the side of art, by investiga-

tion into external nature and into the heart of man, by theological criticism and by historical criticism; it would even be simpler to say at once by historical criticism, for in its highest sense this embraces and is made up of all the others.

In all the subjects of his study, to whatever phase of thought or life he turned, through all his wanderings, his inconsistencies, his countless contradictions, his dreamy unrealities, his inexactness and impatient conclusions, this was the guiding principle to which Herder trusted, and it led him safe in spite of error. But it is from his universal application of this principle that the difficulty of this chapter arises, for as it occurs everywhere it is hard to isolate the thought, and at the same time to avoid endless repetition. And besides, Herder does not anywhere strictly examine his guide, just as the mariner does not write treatises on the pole-star; so that it is only after some hesitation that I have concluded this central idea is more fully and singly illustrated or announced in two of Herder's works than in the rest, and have therefore determined to confine myself in this chapter to the consideration of these. Also the two are in a special sense one, or serve as the complements of each other even more than is usual with Herder's books; for the *Conversations, or Dialogues on God*, and the *Ideas for the Philosophy of the History of Mankind*, which I shall continue to speak of as the *Ideen*, were really produced side by side during the same few years (1783-1787). And, although the former was not written till after the three most important parts of the *Ideen* were finished, the conception of it, as far as we can date conception, was at least as early; indeed, as has been shown, the germs of both were in Herder's mind from his youngest thoughts. It will not, therefore, be that commonest and most annoying of sins, a sin against time, if this chapter begins with an account of the *Dialogues on God*, and by thus starting from the depths of the ultimate principles gains some foundation for considering the work, or rather the suggestion of innumerable works, by which Herder's name is most widely known.

The history of this *Dialogue*, for it is only one though

divided into parts, has been already hinted at. As to the title, Herder was certainly right in calling it startling; nor has time tended to make it seem less. I doubt indeed whether any mind of high order, except a German mind, would ever have ventured on it. Now, at all events, we instinctively shrink more and more from everything of the sort, not as being irreverent, still less as being profane, but as implying a certain self-sufficient dogmatism, which inevitably drives the hearer through irritation into the blind alley of flat contradiction, whether it meets us under the form of the blatant "secularist's" tawdry illumination, or as the equally confident familiarity of the self-constituted counsel for the defence of the Most High. So nauseous has this all become, through the howls of insensate bores on the one side and the sighings of sentimentalists on the other, that even in the present case, when we are speaking of a book which appeared a century ago, it will be better to treat it rather as a criticism on Spinoza than as an account of Herder's positive theory of the universe; for though it is undoubtedly both, and is, perhaps, more satisfactory merely as the latter, it seems less offensive to leave this to be deduced from the other, so insurmountable is the loathing for all that class whom Sadi, as quoted by Herder, has called "those praters and gossipers about God"; so vivid is the fear lest for a moment one should fall into their company.

We will, therefore—to begin with at all events—simply consider this treatise as being the first book, as far as I can gather, which was definitely written, not merely in defence but in enthusiastic admiration of Spinoza. For a hundred years ago modern philosophy had hardly begun; German philosophy could only boast the one great name of Leibnitz, since, though the *Kritik* had appeared in 1781, its enormous significance was not generally recognised for some years. A contented and mechanical Deism was still triumphant amongst the enlightened, whether they followed Voltaire or Gibbon, Nicolai, Rousseau, or Wolff; and unless we remember this it is hard to understand the shock which ran through Germany when three of the foremost men in the land on a sudden began to proclaim the gospel

according to Spinoza. That this Benedict or Baruch Spinoza, this glass-grinding Jew, who was supposed to wear the mark of damnation in his face, whom every cultured nation and tongue had agreed to brand as Atheist, who for a hundred years had been spoken of as a dead dog only to be kicked, who by a very merry jest was known as *Maledictus* rather than *Benedictus*; that this man—who indeed “scarce for his stupidity and trifling way of arguing merited to obtain a place amongst the lowest forms of inferior animals”¹—should now be put forward as an Israelite indeed, a prophet and more than a prophet, as a theist of theists, a Christian of Christians (*theissimum et Christianissimum*), in Goethe’s words: to the wise this seemed foolishness, a doctrine to be held by no sane man. So completely has the estimation of Spinoza been reversed that it is hard to realise that this is an under-statement rather than exaggeration of the almost universal horror, or rather contempt, with which he was then regarded. To most who deigned to notice him either in easy confutation or easier abuse he was only known through the famous article in Bayle’s Dictionary; and indeed it is one of Herder’s chief services that he put an end to this method of estimation by showing that Bayle was hopelessly lost in the error of prejudice, and that a man who “took equal interest in a wrong date and the question of the existence of a deity” could hardly be expected to fathom a profound philosophy.

It is surely significant, therefore, when we see the three greatest minds in Germany—always excepting Kant, whose knowledge of Spinoza is doubtful, and Schiller, who was yet too young,—these three, Lessing, Goethe, and Herder, simultaneously and independently engaged in studying Spinoza for themselves, and coming more and more to the conclusion that in this book, if in any, they had found their creed, though none of them was anxious to be called a Spinozist, well knowing the

¹ Matthias Earbery’s answer to the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, quoted by Mr. Pollock, *Spinoza*, p. 383.

unimportance and, what is worse, the restriction of all these names and systems. Whilst Herder was in Riga he spoke of Spinoza in the then customary tone of depreciation, probably through ignorance, the root of all abuse. We have seen that he did not really begin to study Spinoza till he was more than half-way through the Bückeburg period. Goethe certainly began earlier, for he seems to have been already fairly acquainted with the Ethics when he conversed with Jacobi on Spinoza at Cologne during his Rhine journey. Lessing, as is well known, was acquainted with Spinoza at least twenty years before this, but was far from adopting his philosophy at that time, or indeed at any time as a complete system. But it appears to me just possible that his interest in Spinoza may have been revived by the sight of the celebrated portrait of him at Wolfenbüttel,¹ where Lessing was appointed librarian in 1770; so that if a date has to be fixed for the resurrection of Spinoza, which has exercised such incalculable influence on the whole course of modern thought, I should be inclined to name 1770 and the four or five following years; for, when once these three had pledged themselves to establish not only the innocence but the supremacy of Spinoza, there could be no doubt as to the final issue.

Of Spinoza's indirect influence on Herder's work something has been already said. I think it probable, too, that Lessing's increased tendency during his later years to theological or anti-theological polemic, as well as the extreme breadth of view in *Nathan*, in spite of its Deism, and in *The Education of the Human Race*, are at least partially due to the same cause. But it was Goethe who first gave expression to Spinozism as an idea, and we have seen that it was through a conversation between Jacobi and Lessing on Goethe's *Prometheus*, in July of 1780, that the crisis in the history of Spinozism at length came. Jacobi had been undoubtedly acquainted with Spinoza for some

¹ There is a photograph from the original in Dr. Martineau's *Study on Spinoza*.

ten years, and boasted himself no mean interpreter; indeed his main theory or objection, though cast in an antiquated form, seems to have been not so far from the truth as has usually been supposed, if we must judge Spinoza from his two latest interpreters—Dr. Martineau and Mr. Pollock. But this interpretation differs in important respects from the interpretation which was proclaimed by Herder and Goethe, and was the soul of philosophy—especially of German philosophy—for a space of years whose limits are not yet quite clear.

At all events it is hard to avoid laughing at Jacobi whether he was right or wrong; he is so exceeding solemn, so unconscious of laughter himself. Old woman Jacobi, *marketenderin* to the army of faith, as Heine has called him in the exquisite passage translated below,¹ a man of grave and dignified mien, as Herder had learnt with some apprehension, never for a moment suspected that the quick-witted Lessing could venture to laugh at a person of his pretensions in philosophy. The calm unconsciousness with which Jacobi wrote out for Mendelssohn some three years later an account of his conversation with Lessing on Goethe's *Prometheus* and Spinoza is one of the most extraordinary instances of blindness in history. Truly if this is the result of being "punished with metaphysics," as Goethe said Jacobi was punished, let us have no more of them. But this almost incredible lack of wit really increases our pleasure in the scene, for it makes us sure that Jacobi's account is nearly word for word true, and we can join Lessing in his chuckle over his opponent's solemnity. The conversation is too familiar to

¹ "It is worthy of notice how the most diverse parties in the world joined in the war against Spinoza. They make up an army whose variegated arrangement presents the most ludicrous aspect. Side by side with a mob of black Capuchins and of white, with their crosses and smoking censers, marches the phalanx of the Encyclopædists, who were quite as zealous against this *penseur teméraire*. Side by side with the Rabbi of the Amsterdam synagogue, who sounds to the combat with the ram's horn of faith, steps Arouet de Voltaire, making sweet music for the behoof of deism on the piccolo of persiflage. In the midst, the old woman Jacobi, the *marketenderin* of this army of faith."—*Briefe über Deutschland*, 2nd book.

need repetition here.¹ It is sufficient to mention the main results, namely, that Lessing boldly—though probably by way of paradox—declared Leibnitz himself to be a Spinozist at heart, and for his own part confessed that, though his creed was written in no book, he would take Spinoza for his master if he must take any one. Whereupon Jacobi, admitting that Spinozism was safe from refutation by logic, maintained that it was identical with atheism, and that from atheism we must take refuge by a mortal, or as we might say an immortal, leap of faith, a *salto mortale* as he called it to Lessing, and in his correspondence with Goethe and Herder; but Lessing refused to jump, being unqualified by age and weight for any such athletic performances. Six months afterwards he took the last and easiest leap of all, to the irreparable loss of mankind; and, though the direction in which his thoughts were tending is obvious enough, I suppose that Heine was undoubtedly justified in saying: “Rest quiet in thy grave, old Moses! thy Lessing was truly on the way to this horrible error, this piteous misery, I mean Spinozism; but the Almighty, the Father in heaven, saved him by death whilst there was yet time. Rest in peace! thy Lessing was no Spinozist, as the tongue of calumny asserted; he died a good Deist, just as thou and Nicolai and Teller and the Universal German Library!”²

Herder like the rest of the world was considerably surprised by Jacobi's account of the conversation, which first appeared in the form of a letter to Mendelssohn, who was collecting materials for Lessing's biography. Jacobi sent a copy of this letter to Herder towards the end of 1783, and we may gather with what feelings it was read from a sentence in a letter to Gleim some two or three years later (1786). “I am a Spinozist,” Herder writes, “quite independently of Lessing, and was as pleased as a child to find my brother in the spirit there so unexpectedly.”

¹ English readers will find a brief but sufficient account of it in Mr. Pollock's *Spinoza*, p. 392. The story of the conversation and the whole conflict with Mendelssohn is best given by Jacobi himself, *Ueber die Lehre des Spinoza*, the second edition of which attempts some answer to Herder.

² *Briefe über Deutschland*, 2nd book, towards the end.



But though he had been meditating a treatise on Spinoza, Shaftesbury, and Leibnitz for seven or eight years past (since 1775-6), he was extremely unwilling to be dragged into a strife that became more and more useless, acrimonious, and personal; more especially as he had no real foothold in either camp, believing that both had missed the true position, and had gone out into the wilderness after a very small matter. For a long time, therefore, he contented himself with the office of mediator, and repeatedly urged Jacobi in his letters to mitigate the harshness of his language with regard to the sorrowing old Moses, and to lay aside the polemical tone as far as possible. Much of his advice was followed, especially in the first edition of the treatise on Spinoza; but unfortunately Jacobi's zeal had been further fired by the death of his wife, and, though this almost silences criticism, its influence on his mind allows him no place amongst philosophers, whose hearts, as far as philosophy goes, must not be touched by mortal things.

The correspondence on Spinoza, therefore—between Jacobi on one side and Herder and Goethe on the other—dragged on through three or four years without the possibility of a conclusion. Goethe is generally content to leave the statement of his own views to Herder, who, as he repeatedly says, was quite at one with him on this point; for his own part, as is well known, he wrote that he preferred to get his physics clear before he advanced to metaphysics, and was always so glad to hold his peace when people began to talk about the Divine Being. There is some irony in Goethe's tone throughout, and indeed in Herder's too; perhaps irony was unavoidable in dealing with so dignified a person. At all events it is worth remembering that Jacobi was one of the few people with whom Goethe almost lost his temper, both before this and some twenty years afterwards. Herder's letters are interesting as containing in a brief form the substance of his later treatise. His contention with Jacobi in fact turned on the point whether Pantheism was really identical with atheism, as it had hitherto been practically considered. Certainly identical, said Jacobi, or at all events Spinoza proclaims atheism, for "he

upsets all belief in a Providence, a plan of the world, a God who has being in himself, who is conscious in himself and not merely in his creatures." "You, yourself," Herder replies, "are throughout a truly orthodox Christian; for you have an extramundane God, *comme il faut*, and have saved your soul;" but he had not hesitated to send a full and eloquent account of his own position, which he supposed to be the same as Spinoza's, or at all events a legitimate deduction therefrom (in two letters especially, February and December 1784).¹ He starts with Lessing's saying, that is so often referred to throughout the controversy: "One and all (*Ἐν καὶ πάν*), I know no more"; and his conclusion in the whole matter may be gathered from a rendering of some sentences in a long and enthusiastic passage, in which he identifies Spinozism with the teaching of Christ and Moses, of all the apostles, philosophers, and prophets:

God is of a truth outside you, and works in and through all creation (the extramundane God I do not know); but what is the meaning of God to you if he is not in you and you are conscious of his existence in the depths of your inmost being, and he fulfils his existence (*sich genießet*) in you as one of his thousand million instruments? You want a God in human form as a friend to take thought for you. But reflect, he must then be human and limited too. He speaks to you and works on you from all noble human forms, who were his instruments, and especially from the instrument of instruments, the heart of the spiritual creation. . . . If you turn this most spiritual and highest and widest conception into an empty name, you are an atheist and not Spinoza. According to him, God is the being of beings, Jehovah. ✓

This may serve as the heart of all that Herder wrote on the subject. Jacobi was not convinced, but went on his way as before. By 1787 he had ready for publication a treatise on David Hume, in which he maintained that knowledge was impossible without faith in direct revelation. It may be remembered that, many years afterwards, he drove Goethe again to take refuge in the calm sanctuary of Spinoza, by declaring that the purpose of Nature was to conceal God rather than to reveal.

And now Herder, having finished the third part of the *Ideen*, felt that it was time to speak. He was convinced that no one had yet done justice to Spinoza; he was irresistibly attracted by the holiness and beauty of his life, by the almost superhuman magnificence of many of his sayings, which I suppose to be unsurpassed for truth and paradox except by the sayings of Christ. The sole purpose which he set before himself was to free Spinoza's memory from the charge of atheism, and in those days this purpose had still the fascination of novelty and the charm of chivalrous adventure. He may have been wrong, or at least incomplete, in his interpretation; he may have read his own spirit into Spinoza, or, as Jacobi insisted, have unconsciously followed the Kabbala rather than the philosopher; in other words, he may have fallen into what I am inclined to call Spinoza's trap. But, if this is so, he is not alone in this; for the profound influence which Spinoza has exercised on the thought of the last hundred years has been mainly due to a similar mistake, if mistake it be, either acknowledged or overlooked. And, indeed, after a careful consideration of the *Ethics* and *Epistles*, even by the light of the two latest, clearest, and—as far as Spinoza goes—most anti-theistic commentaries already referred to, I confess myself at present unable to decide whether there is a trap at all; or, if there is, whether Spinoza fell into it himself, by reason of his descent and the suppressed poetic fervour of his nature. For he was not a man to compromise, nor was he a man to fail of his purpose; so that he can neither have cloaked his doctrines in theological garb as a disguise, nor have equipped them in theological arms out of irony, as for a sham fight or review when the battle was over; for in this case he certainly failed to cheat his opponents through at least a hundred years, since no one hesitated to call him Atheist.

Having determined that it was time for some one to speak, and speak plainly, on this matter, Herder struck boldly at the root by undertaking not merely the defence of Lessing but the defence of Spinoza himself, which of course included the other. He gave up his old scheme of writing on Spinoza, Shaftesbury,

and Leibnitz in conjunction, and devoted himself entirely to overthrowing the charge of Atheism against Spinoza ; and, unless this purpose is kept clearly in mind, together with the previous history of Spinozism, and the horror and contempt with which the doctrine was almost universally mentioned, the book is likely enough to prove disappointing. It is written in the form of a dialogue, and was originally published under the title of *God : some Conversations on Spinoza's System*, but has come to be more generally spoken of as *Some Conversations on God*. The first four books are dialogues between two friends, Theophron and Philolaus, of whom Theophron is supposed to be the true Spinozist, or, rather, defender of Spinoza ; for Herder would not have consented to accept Spinoza's system in its completeness but only after his own interpretation and development ; and Philolaus is a shrewd and cultivated thinker, who hitherto has followed the multitude in condemning Spinoza without the trouble of reading him. But, as Herder was incapable of drama, the characters are not strictly kept, and these four books may really be read straight through with hardly a thought of them. In the fifth book a "lady friend," Theano, who in some unaccountable way had been an invisible listener hitherto, enters bodily, with her embroidery, in the hope by her feminine presence to restrain the philosophers from overweening flights into the dim regions of the inane. But she certainly does not increase the scientific tone and thoroughness of the dialogue, and indeed contributes very little in her dramatic character except some illustrations and outcries, both equally feminine. There is some half-conscious irony in her observation, towards the beginning of the book, how sweet and comforting a thing is Spinoza's doctrine of necessity, especially to the heart of women, who, by the ordinance of Nature and the decree of man, are allowed so little of the freedom of will for which they are naturally most eager.

But, for the rest, we may set aside the form of dialogue as entirely unimportant and, indeed, unfortunate. We shall then see that Herder deals suggestively enough with several points in the history of Spinoza's system, as it arose in his mind, and in

the history of its reception by the world. He begins by showing the inadequacy of Bayle's account, hitherto generally accepted, and gives a few rules for the study of Spinoza, and a translation of the passage in which he describes his choice of life. He also criticises Descartes, to whose identification of extension and matter he attributes much of the obscurity or error of Spinozism. It is noticeable that Herder continually regrets that Spinoza was born at a time so completely under the influence of Descartes, and so far removed from the discoveries of modern physical science, such as magnetism and electricity, which, in Herder's opinion, have gone far to prove that matter is not dead, but instinct throughout with life. "Without physical science," he goes on, "metaphysic builds castles in the air"; and, again, in the beginning of the third book, "science banishes the arbitrary and wilful, and therefore banishes fear." He prophesies that the day will soon come when all that seems arbitrary will have been explained from the world; and, after an embittered onslaught against the vulgar teleology that was received as orthodox, he adds, "I wish others would go bravely forward on the way Spinoza has opened, and would unravel the simple laws of Nature without troubling themselves about God's particular purposes." There is also a full discussion of Lessing's conversation and of his position, as well as of Jacobi's. As to the latter, Herder is inclined to think that it is best, if possible, to do without any "mortal leap," for "we are on Creation's level ground." It may be mentioned that in this treatise, for the first time, we find a distinctly polemical tone against Kant appearing at intervals throughout. Theano, for instance, is in sore distress because her brother has lately begun to talk a strange and mysterious tongue, as though he were possessed of a devil; and there is a good deal of misplaced satire on the impossibility of proof or disproof of God's existence. Some few of the minor points in Spinoza's system are also touched upon and partially explained, such as the non-existence of evil, the freedom of determinism, the theory of individuality (added in the second edition), and the supposed necessity of the geometric form,

together with Spinoza's anticipation of modern criticism and religious tolerance. But several of the greatest difficulties appear to have been overlooked, or at least set aside,¹ as not pertinent to the present question, which, as has been said, turned on the Atheism of Spinoza.

And here we come to the heart of the whole matter, and can see now that it is simple enough. The treatise is an unflinching blow at eighteenth-century Deism; a Deism that said "a hand unseen directs and guides this weak machine,"² and tried to rouse a gentle enthusiasm for a God who sat apart from the world and "watched it go," having wound it up to work for a time, like an eight-day clock,³ and contenting himself with now and again jerking at the pendulum and pullies—a religion fit for Geneva watchmakers, as Heine said. It was an interpretation of wits and pedants, talking a jargon about plans and purposes, excellent mechanism and divine contrivance. As long as it was allowed to dogmatise, it could make all as clear as day by its assertions; but, having assumed an all-wise and all-powerful God, it could at any moment have been forced also to confess that he must either be indifferent or spiteful. Alas! more people

¹ Such difficulties I mean as the following, which necessarily puzzle all readers, or at least beginners, in Spinoza: How can dualism be fused in monism? What is the connexion between body and mind? What does he exactly mean by the Attributes of Substance, and why are they infinite? Assuming the independence of thought and extension, is not thought the only thing necessary? How, then, can thought take rank with the other Attributes? Does Spinoza's system account for self-consciousness? What can we take as a test of truth, for clearness of idea is no test, nor does Spinoza claim it to be such? What is the meaning or the two meanings of the word Idea? What did Spinoza understand by a *causa sui*? It is very strange, too, that Herder should have taken so little notice of the fifth part of the *Ethics* and its almost mystic language on immortality.

² Libretto to *Judas Maccabæus*, the whole of which, with its "pious orgies, decent prayers," its semi-paganism, vulgar presumption, and frigid blasphemies, may serve as a fair type of average eighteenth-century Deism, though it is but a paltry straw in the stream.

³ See Carlyle's *Past and Present*, p. 25. It is possible that Carlyle adapted the metaphor from Heine.

than the outspoken Frenchwoman were beginning to find the *Être Suprême* a bore.

Herder's onslaught on such a conception of God is almost incredibly bold and defiant, considering his position in a Church whose thinking members took their views of orthodoxy from Leibnitz according to Wolff; when we remember how real a thing Deism still was to many, it is almost profane. He can see no beauty in a God who "sat like a scrupulous artist, beating his brains and making plans, comparisons, rejections, and selections; who played with worlds, as children play with soap-bubbles, till he gave preference to the one that pleased him most." Or, again:

"The world," says Leibnitz, "existed in God from eternity as an idea," that is as a soap-bubble with which he played in imagination; he was delighted with it, and brooded through ages of eternity over this unborn egg. At length the time came [imagine the weary, weary time through the eternity of this inactive God], and now he resolved to create. On a sudden the world issued from God, the world that had been so long in him, and now it is outside him for ever, and he outside the world. In the great Inane of primeval, inactive eternity he has his corner (*Räumchen*) where he contemplates himself, and probably ponders on the project of another world. I confess that in my opinion the gods of Epicurus are more sufferable than this inactive, melancholy being, through whom people have believed Spinoza could be overthrown off-hand.¹

The Deist might of course reply, that all this comes very near to persiflage, and that such an interpretation of their fundamental idea is unfairly anthropomorphic; indeed, as we are human, it does not seem likely that we shall escape from human conceptions, so that the charge of anthropomorphism becomes merely a question of degree. I suppose, for instance, that many modern thinkers would maintain that Herder himself erred both in his interpretation of Spinoza and in his theory of the universe from this selfsame cause, this inevitable tendency to personify, to seek for ends and divine purposes, to crave for a reality other and greater than phenomena, to imagine a principle of life and

¹ *Gott, Drittes Gespräch*, about the middle.

thought distinct from and independent of a cunning self-adjustment of what we call matter, however living and unknowable matter may appear; the tendency to speak, as Emerson spoke, of an "over-soul." And this is what I mean by saying, that, if there is a trap for the unwary in Spinoza, Herder has fallen into it. If Spinoza had throughout called his Substance merely Substance, or Nature, instead of God, I think it is doubtful whether Herder's treatise would ever have been written.¹

If the pit-fall exists, it is on this word that Herder trips; he cannot escape personification; the idea of God carries him away; and, when he supposes himself merely to be stating Spinozism in fresh terms, he is really reading his own ideas into it. He maintains the divinity and necessary existence of the universe, but all the time we cannot help feeling that he regards the universe not as God but as "the garment of God." The golden chain of nature, the ceaseless rush of energy along the course of time, of which he speaks, is really the visible expression of the primeval soul, of the eternal and original power of thought and power of action, the *Urkraft* not outside creation but for ever immanent in creation, and this is what he means by God. He sets his insistence on the side of thought; he practically deifies thought. As he vigorously says in one place, to him the word "is," even the algebraical sign of equality, is proof enough of the existence of God. He supposes, though with some obscurity, that the introduction of "organic forces" would improve Spinoza's system, and by organic forces he means the spiritual force or thought, and the bodily force or movement, which he would probably have identified with life. That he should have insisted on these two of all the infinite ways in which, as he says, God infinitely reveals himself, proves the essential idealism of his position; for the introduction of "organic forces" was not in itself necessary—since, if they exist, they are by the definition included in Spinoza's conception of Substance or God; indeed,

¹ "As far as logic goes, Spinoza's God is identical with nature, but I think in other ways he meant something very different," said the teacher who first told me anything definite about Spinoza; but this was probably a pious fraud.

thought is one of the two knowable Attributes of Substance ; and, in a certain sense, life or existence may be identified with Substance itself. And yet there is a certain mystery about thought and organic life which sometimes does not seem to be shared by the other Attribute and Modes of Substance, but drives us inevitably into the region of myth and personification. Herder, therefore, being conscious of these two eternal mysteries—the mystery of thought and the mystery of life—took his stand upon their unspeakable significance, and for the rest was content to watch the face of the universe in the time of history, the space of physics, and in the heart of man as part of nature, with the sure and certain hope that here at least it might be possible to find some revelation of the soul in whom we live and move ; of the power which, as he himself says, “ was unto Moses Jehovah, I am that I am, and shall be that I shall be.”

It is very possible that in all this Herder is constructing a kind of Theism, or even mythology, out of one of the most remarkably anti-theistic systems the world has seen. My object is not to defend his interpretation but to show its historical significance. Unless others, especially in Germany—though in England as well, through Germany—had adopted a closely-similar interpretation, it is very certain that Spinozism would not have exercised anything like the influence which it has exercised during the last hundred years. When Herder first spoke, Spinoza was a by-word in Europe, and now his fame is gone out into all lands. As might be expected, Herder's book was received with very opposite feelings and much excitement. Jacobi complained bitterly that this God was no helper to humanity, and for some years all intercourse between him and Herder ceased. Hamann, being then near death, called the book a *Schuhu*, a great horned owl, that had better creep away and hide itself in the dark. On the other hand, Goethe, who received it on his birthday in Rome, writes :

It was so comforting and refreshing to me in this Babel, the mother of so much deceit and error, to read a book so pure and beautiful, and to think that after all this is the time when such opinions and ways of

thought can be published abroad without fear. It has encouraged me to advance still further into nature, where, especially in botany, I have come upon a "Ἐν καὶ πᾶν (the original plant), which fills me with astonishment.

The book sold quickly, for men's hearts were astir. In the preface to the second edition (1800) Herder mentions that this might have been published long before, only Spinoza had needed no further defence of late. The air was full of him. Under the influence of Kant and Spinoza the old Deism was as good as dead, and what has been called Pantheism was being born. Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, all impregnated with Spinoza, though starting from Kant, were beginning to pile their systems. The idea was alive, and it grew and multiplied. In 1797 Schelling published his *Philosophy of Nature*, and the next year his book on the *Soul of the World* (*Weltseele*). Schelling, it is true, complained that Spinozism was cold and lifeless; but Heine tells us that as long as Schelling was a philosopher he was a Spinozist. On the other hand, Herder disowned the conception of the *Weltseele* as anthropomorphic and partial: but in all essentials it seems to have been identical with his own interpretation. And it is this interpretation that has lived hitherto; we find it in line after line of Goethe's poems, in the systems of those three philosophers, in Shelley, in Heine at his best, in the *Sartor*, and in Emerson. Under one form of development or another it may be called the central idea of a century of thought. It has for years been the one possible road for those who refused to turn aside into the convenient refuge-city of Agnosticism, and were unsatisfied with the beautiful and accommodating versatility of the Chinese, of old the best of conjurors, who can swallow three distinct systems of religion side by side, and be ready for any number more.

There is, of course, a noble eclecticism too, both fearless and reverent, which, by a power of universal sympathy, strives to take to itself the heart and life of every system, of every form of religion which has had strength to be a guide unto men and to survive its own weaknesses. But this kind, if it differs at all from Herder's interpretation of life, as I have here attempted

to set it forth, comes so very near—especially in its aspect of history, with which we have now most concern—as to render exact distinction unnecessary.

As to the name of this idea, which, since Herder's treatise was published, has been the secret mainspring of all advance in thought, and correlatively on the concrete side of all advance in science—if we must still bind ourselves to names, it seems to be of little importance whether we call it theism or pantheism, or pot-theism either, "if the thing is true."¹ The tendency to believe in names, either for abuse or for worship, is growing fainter. We are more and more unwilling to enslave ourselves in the limits of any *ism* or *ity*, however recent and plausible. We no longer dream of the near approach of a blessed and lethargic time, when the universe will be explained with the conciseness of an algebraical formula. Many run to and fro, and knowledge is increased; but we are beginning to see that the thing is not to stand obstinately rooted in a system, still less to construct a system for the limitation of others, but to be awake to the influence of pregnant ideas, and, if it may be, to increase the sum of them. We are beginning to realise the profound truth of the saying—the letter killeth, but the spirit maketh alive.

In the weird borderland of history a maiden was standing at an emperor's seat of judgment, in sore peril of death by reason of the craft of her enemies. But it had been shown to her in a vision that if she was steadfast in supplication a deliverer would come unto her; therefore she cried for three days, and ceased not. And at the end of the third day a knight was seen approaching up the stream of the Rhine, drawn by a magic bird; and he overthrew her enemies, and himself wedded the maiden. Yet was their hatred not appeased, nor did their guile fail them; for in the evening they said to her, "This champion of thine is no true knight, but a false. Canst thou even tell his name?" Therefore, in the bridal chamber she asked

¹ Carlyle's *Life of John Sterling*, p. 109.

him, saying, "Tell me thy name," and he told her, and his name was Lohengrin, son of Parsifal, the guardian of the Holy Grail. But she had no pleasure in the name; for, as soon as he had told her, he got him thence by the way by which he had come, and left her sorrowing, and was seen no more. In one form or other the story seems almost as old as history, and it may still be found significant.

Turning now to the concrete or historical side of Herder's aspect of the universe, we come at last to the *Ideen*, the ideas or hints for the philosophy of the history of mankind. The first part was written in Herder's fortieth year; the fourth and last part was ready before he went to Italy, and was left in Goethe's keeping, but was not published till 1791, for reasons which will appear. The work was never finished, though some later writings may be regarded as continuations of the same under a different title. I have endeavoured to trace the history of the conception as it grew in his mind; indeed, it may be said the story of his life hitherto has been nothing but the history of this, and for anticipations of the basis of the *Ideen* we can point to much of his work in Riga, his *Diary* at Nantes, the prize-essay on *Language*, the pamphlet called *Another Contribution to the Philosophy of History*, and to separate passages in nearly all his works. From childhood up we have seen his passion for history in its widest sense, and his enthusiasm for the study of man. It would be strange, therefore, if the *Ideen*, a book bearing directly on his favourite theme, and written during his best years, were not also the best of his works. And such I believe it to be, and such—which is more important—a century of time has declared it. For I find that people and writers who just know Herder by name always first think of him as the author of the *Ideen*; if they know a little more they add the *Volkslieder*, and so on to the *Fragments* and his opposition to Kant; and, I suppose, sufficient time has now passed to make this verdict final.

Yet it is noticeable that the *Ideen* had not so pronounced and immediate an effect as much of Herder's earlier work. This is no doubt partly due to the nature of the subject, for we are not all

men of science nor historians, whereas we are all born poets, or at least capable of poetry. It was perhaps for this, as well as other and subtler reasons, that Goethe, after praising the third part, added, "The book will effect its chiefest good only after a length of time, and perhaps in foreign nations"; a prophecy which has come true, though he himself seems to confute it in two different ways; for when the French translation of the *Ideen* appeared Goethe said, "The influence of the book on the culture of our nation has been incredible"; and later in life, when Herder seemed almost forgotten, he was inclined to disparage the *Ideen* as having been long superseded. But the fact is, since 1859-60 England has been the centre of modern thought, and the *Ideen* comes much nearer the modern English aspect of history than the intermediate German period. And again it is almost absurd (I speak with reverence) to say that such a book is superseded. It is as though we said Philip was superseded by Alexander, Plato by Kant. No man, no book, no system that has given a true idea to the world, can ever be superseded, for we are all its children.

The great difficulty in giving a sufficiently short account of the *Ideen*, for those who are unacquainted with the original, is its excellence. It is one of the few of Herder's books that still may be read through from beginning to end with pleasure, and something more than pleasure, in spite of occasional contradictions, inaccuracies, and mistakes arising from knowledge inevitably insufficient. The style is simple and straightforward, and the tone for the most part calmly philosophic, free from common prejudice and blind enthusiasm; the whole is so nearly scientific that any page will prove how completely Herder had delivered himself from all that was hot and cloudy and obscure in the season of Storm and Stress, when such books as the *Urkunde* were written. Something is lost, of course, but it is something which is only too likely to become wearisome, and in a book of this kind is out of place; indeed this something was not properly Herder's to start with, but Hamann's rather; it was therefore doomed to disappear. Needs must that a man

borrow, for he grows with the world; but only the borrowings of genius are bearable, for they are always new. In the *Ideen*, accordingly, we find that Herder has a style of his own, a beautiful and simple style, as refreshing as running water compared to the gasping tension of a modern German scientific treatise.

The substance falls naturally into two main divisions: first, the science of nature or man's place in the universe, then the science of history or man's development in time. It may be said that these two are really one; but the distinction is convenient, and has hitherto been generally recognised. The difficulty is to explain the bearings of these two parts without being lengthy and without wearying the reader with constant references and extracts that would be out of place in an attempt of this kind.

But, before we proceed to glance at these two main divisions, an apparent contradiction may be mentioned between the tone of parts of the *Ideen* and the treatise called *God*. When the supernatural is introduced at all in the *Ideen*, though this is not often, Herder's language is for the most part the language of a Deist. And indeed Baerenbach, in his comments on a series of quotations from the *Ideen*, by which he expounds Herder's theory of natural development, speaks throughout of "Herder the Deist."¹ Many reasons might be assigned for this contradiction. It may be said that Herder was unwilling to raise an issue on a point which he regarded as subordinate to his main object; or that he adopted the generally accepted aspect of the supernatural, when he was obliged to introduce it at all into a work which only sought after the natural in physics and history; just as Darwin speaks of "the Creator" with reference to his own law of nature. Such explanations will hold; but, as usual, I should be inclined to turn to time, the universal explanation—to which may here be added the confusion of thought inseparable from such a period of change and overthrow. No great revolution is accomplished at a blow; relics of the old customs, the

¹ *Herder als Vorgänger Darwin's* (1877).

old loyalty, will remain, certainly for a time, perhaps for ages, will possibly outlast a score of succeeding revolutions, and come to be perplexing to the antiquary and social inquirer. And, to take a narrower basis, it must be remembered that, though the *Ideen* and the *Discourse on God* grew side by side, the *Discourse* was written later; and any increase in boldness and precision will not be surprising to any one who has seen how incalculably a man will develop within a year, even within a few months. After this warning we may here finally quit the supernatural for what is known as the natural, though indeed it might well be said that the distinction is rather conventional than intrinsic.

The great difficulty of the first or physical part of the *Ideen* arises from much the same source of confusion as was mentioned above. Herder was standing close to the point of a new departure in scientific investigation, but he did not recognise the full significance of his position—he did not see whither this sharp turning would lead him—it is doubtful if he saw there was a turning at all; at all events, he remained standing with one foot on the old road and one on the new. It sometimes seems in reading the *Ideen* that only a slight push, a small impulse of knowledge, was needed, and we should have talked of Herderism and not of Darwinism. But this is not true, for the time was not ripe, and nature is in no hurry. The discovery of the laws of evolution and natural selection was gradual, and has a long history; but it was almost as impossible that it should be consummated by Herder as by Jacob. In the same way the subordinate law of sexual selection has been practically recognised through countless generations, but we cannot say that it was scientifically formulated even by Shakespeare in the first four lines of the Sonnets. Apparent anticipations such as these may be found scattered up and down the whole course of literature. We come upon something very like Darwinism in Cudworth, enemy as he is to the whole school called English. But all such things are to be regarded at best as merely glorious guesses, significant and interesting to us as parts of history, but to be treated with the greatest care, lest we exaggerate their import-

ance by separating them from their times and reading them only by the light of our present knowledge. In the *Ideen*, therefore, the thing is rather to remember how far Herder was removed from Darwin, than to watch for resemblances. The resemblances indeed are obvious to the least watchful eye, but to appreciate the gulf of difference some self-control and historical imagination is needed. From the *Ideen* I have collected several passages, between thirty and forty in all, which come so close in tone, sometimes even in words, to the *Origin of Species*, that after all precautions I cannot help regarding the work as a brilliant attempt to bridge the chasm between Spinoza and Darwin, though Herder, starting as he did from Spinoza, and using as his materials merely the sciences of physics and history, yet did not see clearly whither the other end of his bridge would reach. It is, therefore, his purely inductive and scientific method of building, rather than the edifice, which remains of importance.

The *Ideen*, as though to prove the insignificance as well as the sublimity of the subject, begins with the position of the earth in the universe of stars. This is followed by some chapters on the earth's crust, its formation, the influence of the atmosphere, and the vast revolutions through which it must have passed before man could appear. Tracing the various forms of life in the order in which he supposed they were produced, from the lichen up to man, Herder enunciates what may serve as the text of his work: "Thus has Nature produced the greatest variety out of a simplicity in endless progression." The rest of the first part, especially the third book, and most of the second part, may be regarded as proof or commentary of this text. He illustrates this unity of creation from almost every branch of natural organic science, from geology, from plants,¹ from comparative anatomy, from the universal mystery of gene-

¹ For account of fertilization of plants and uniformity of generation, see Part I. book ii. chap. 2; for hint at possibility of a sensitive system in plants, book iii. chap. 4. (The *Ideen* was admirably translated at the beginning of this century by F. Churchill.)

ration, from embryology, and that strange uniformity or typical form (*Hauptform*) which prevails through vast numbers of distinct species and is the foundation of the great generic distinctions; "This truly wonderful fact," as Darwin says, "the wonder of which we are apt to overlook from familiarity." And again, "If species had been independently created no explanation would have been possible of this kind of classification."¹

But, granting the uniformity of nature, it is more important to find out how Herder traces and accounts for the endless variety that has arisen out of uniformity, in fact for the origin of species; and we shall see that it is here he breaks down, though it is often astonishing how near the more modern views he comes, considering the state of scientific knowledge at the time and his own small opportunities for scientific observation. One of the most remarkable points is, that in those days the difficulty of the origin of species should have occurred to him at all, even in such a form or with such an answer as this:

Why did the creative Mother produce separate species at all? For no other object than that they might thereby more perfectly produce and uphold the type of their conformation. We do not know how many of our present species may have approached more nearly to each other in an earlier period of the world's history; but we see that their limits are now fixed by generation, or in other words (as he goes on to explain) they breed true, or the hybrids are wholly or partially sterile.²

This difficulty, and probably his ignorance of the enormous length of the periods in which Nature works out her changes, led him to suppose that the final numbers and forms of species were now fixed and unalterable since the time when, as he puts it, "the gates of creation were shut."³ This supposition, which draws a hard and fast line in the course of history, would, of course, destroy half the value of his theories; but, fortunately,

¹ Book ii. chap. 4; cf. *Origin of Species* (sixth edition), p. 104.

² Book vii. chap. 4, end; cf. *Origin of Species*, chap. 9, which shows that the argument from such sterility has been exaggerated.

³ Book v. chap. 3.

he is not quite consistent in maintaining it; and in tracing the course of development through the earliest periods he seeks to establish laws which are quite as active now as at the time when life first appeared. In common with most naturalists up to a very recent time, Herder is inclined to lay the greatest stress on the influence of climate in determining the variations and laws of life amongst the lower animals, and especially amongst the tribes of men.¹ As part of the same theory we may regard what he calls the chains with which Nature binds us from our childhood to our possessions, our land, our manners, and language.² From such hints as these, which occur frequently throughout the *Ideen*, it would be possible enough to construct the law of adaptation to environment. Let us take some sentences from a significant passage at the end of the second book:

“The bird flies in the air; every departure of its shape from the formation of land-animals can be explained from the requirements of its element. The fish swims in the water; as yet its feet and hands can only take the form of fins and tail; as yet it has very little articulation of limbs. But as soon as it comes in contact with the land, like the Manatee, it develops at least separate fore-feet, and the female acquires breasts.” Similar instances follow:—“And so there is a gradual advance from the dust of the worms, from the lime-dwellings of molluscs, from the cocoons of insects, up to the more articulate and higher organizations. . . . It is thus proved by anatomy and physiology, that, throughout the whole living creation of our earth, the analogy of one organization is everywhere prevalent.”³

The same method is followed in explaining the gradual development of the brain from the end of the spinal marrow, of the senses in general, and of the special organs of sense that characterise certain species.⁴ If Herder had here been able to explain the ultimate law of this gradual development, how

¹ Book ii. chap. 3, and constantly in the second half of the work; contrast with *Origin of Species*, pp. 43-112, &c.

² Book i. chap. 4.

³ Book ii. chap. 4.

⁴ Book iv. chap. 1, middle; cf. *Origin of Species*, pp. 159-164, “Utilitarian Doctrine”; and pp. 108-112, and 397, for growth of organs by use.

that, before the advantageous change could come about, there must be some variety, some exaggeration—by use or otherwise—of an organ, which, being serviceable to its possessor, was grasped and developed by natural selection, it looks as though the theory might have been complete. He leaves out the active cause of development, and yet in some passages he gets so near that I have found it almost impossible to avoid misreading him by supplying it. This difficulty is perhaps felt most of all in the parts where Herder speaks of the law of persistence and the struggle of each species and individual to continue; for it is this struggle for life which has changed the law of persistence into a law of development, only Herder did not clearly grasp the means by which the change is accomplished.

“Self-preservation is the first object for which a being exists: from the grain of dust to the sun everything strives to remain what it is.”¹ Where there is no struggle or competition this law of persistence is sufficient and does not lead to development, and consequently we see that “the less a nation is pressed upon, and the more truly it is obliged to abide by its simple and savage way of life, the more exactly does it also maintain its original conformation or type.”² But such cases are at least extremely rare: “Nothing in nature stands still; everything strives and struggles onward. Could we only see into the first periods of creation—how one realm of nature was built up on another—what a procession of forces ever struggling onward would be displayed in each development.”³ In this struggle, long before the earth assumed its present form, “millions of creatures were of necessity overwhelmed; what could maintain itself remained, and has been standing now for thousands of years in the great harmonious order.”⁴ And again, “In proportion to the skill and cleverness, the courage and strength, of each species, to that extent was it able to take possession of the earth. . . . All things are in strife against each other, because everything is oppressed or limited; it must look out for itself and take thought for its own life. Why did nature do this? Why did she thus jostle her creatures together? Because she wished in the smallest space to create the greatest number of the most various living

¹ Book viii. chap. 4.

² Book vi. chap. 1, end. This important law is hinted at several times throughout the *Ideen*, and readers may compare *Origin of Species*, pp. 82, 83, for the account of the persistence of anomalous forms such as the *Ornithorhynchus*.

³ Book v. chap. 3.

⁴ Book xv. chap. 2.

× beings, and therefore in creation one overcomes the other, and only by an equilibrium of forces is peace possible. Each species cares for itself as if it were the only species in the world, but at its side stands another to limit it, and only in this relation of opposed forms did the creative Mother find means for the maintenance of the whole. . . . It does not trouble me, therefore, that vast species of animals are extinct. If the mammoth is extinct, so too are the giants; there was then another relation between the races" (*Geschlechtern*, perhaps meaning "between the descendants of the two races").¹

It is clear, then, that Herder regarded each special organ or the conformation as a whole, as having been given to each species or developed solely for the sake of that species, that it might have more chance of preserving itself in the struggle for existence, and not for the sake of any other species nor for man, who is but "a fraction of the whole," as he says in a passage directly bearing on this point.² For the first causes of variety he relies, as has been said, more on climate than is now thought admissible; though he admits that "climate is a chaos of causes, which work very unequally, and therefore slowly and in various ways, till they at length penetrate into the inmost constitution, and even alter this by habit and generation or heredity";³ but in this place he supposes that one species cannot develope into another, though he admits very wide variability within its own limits. He does not overlook the power of inheritance, the importance for his theories of the laws of reproduction and generation—that eternal wonder of wonders;⁴ and it is very noticeable that in one passage whilst he is dwelling on this subject he endeavours to set at rest the old contention of innate ideas by attributing them to inheritance⁵—an explanation which now finds general favour.⁶

¹ Book ii. chap. 3.

² Book iii. chap. 5.

³ Book vii. chap. 5.

⁴ See especially book vii. chap. 4, end.

⁵ Book viii. chapter ii. 5 §.

⁶ From Herder's observation that it is remarkable how amongst the countless different types of the human figure certain forms and relation not only recur but also seem to belong expressly to each other (book vii. chap. 4), it would be possible to deduce something like Darwin's law of Correlated Variations (*Origin of Species*, pp. 114-115); but this would be forced, and is unimportant to Herder's theory.

These are the leading principles of the theory, and the rest need not concern us so much. But Herder has made one deduction from his principles which cannot be overlooked—it is so singularly in accordance with the more recent decrees of science. Again and again he states his belief that advance in organisation means differentiation of the parts in the organic being. What first distinguishes the animal from the plant is the differentiation of the mouth; and so he proceeds to trace various points of differentiation in polyps, worms, and birds. “The higher we go the more various and distinct do the parts become.”¹ And so with the differentiation of sex, “the more complicated the organisation of a creature the more distinct is the separation of the sexes.” This principle he traces in the same way from the plants that are wholly or partially hermaphrodite, through those with distinct sexes, the fish, birds, &c., up to the higher animals.² As an instance of the same law he also brings forward the delicate divisions and complications of the nervous system in the animals that approach nearest to reason,³ and the instincts of such creatures as spiders and bees, which he supposes grow more complex and harder to acquire as the scale of organisation rises.⁴ The same principle, which is now known as the physiological division of labour, is also applied by Herder to the history of society, and is most definitely stated towards the middle of the work after a description of the growth of the human embryo: “Man is the most perfect of earthly creatures only because the finest organic powers we know act in him through the most elaborate instruments of organisation.”⁵

I have now mentioned, though in the barest outline, the points in the physical parts of the *Ideen* which I believe to be most important; and I suppose that their significance can be

¹ Book iii. chap. 1; cf. *Origin of Species*, pp. 89, 97-100.

² Book iii. chap. 1, end; cf. *Origin of Species*, pp. 76-78.

³ Book iii. chap. 2, end.

⁴ Book iii. chap. 4; cf. *Origin of Species*, pp. 205-7.

⁵ Book vii. chap. 3.

overlooked by no one who can realise the general condition of natural science a century ago, its theories of creation and principles of classification, and at the same time bear in mind the general tendency of recent discovery in every department of scientific investigation. The omissions in Herder's account of nature are obvious enough, and were inevitable under the conditions of the time, and also because Herder had neither the power nor the opportunity to collect that vast mass of evidence from careful research, and especially from personal observation, which, in Professor Tyndall's phrase, has made the strength of Darwin as calm and irresistible as the movement of a glacier. As my knowledge of the subject is limited to a few modern works, and those chiefly psychological, I cannot attempt to decide how much Herder was indebted for his physical theories to his contemporaries. Buffon and Linnæus he had certainly studied with care; his friend Forster contributed much, and Goethe's influence is manifest throughout. In the very year in which the first and most physiological part of the *Ideen* was published, Goethe was driven by his belief in the unity of nature to his discovery of the intermaxillary bone in man. It is almost impossible to fix the exact date or even the actual discoverer of any of the great theories or inventions. The mind of man goes vaguely groping about after something, it knows not what, till at length some one with clearer vision and firmer hand grasps the heart of it, and then to all the world it is plain and we laugh at our blindness; then too we see how many have touched it before, but knew not what they did. For this reason, though I think it is a mistake to call Herder an anticipator of Darwin, at the same time I believe he deserves mention in the history of the law of evolution, as the phrase is usually understood.

Those who are unacquainted with the *Ideen* must not think that I have here exhausted the physical side of the book; there is much else that is valuable, and very much that is suggestive. The first part, which may be regarded as a continuous story of the development of creation up to man, abounds in interesting

passages on contemporary discoveries in science, electricity—which Herder seems inclined to identify with what he calls “organic force”—the wonders of geology, the origin of thought and the inexplicable connection between mind and its instrument, the peculiar points of organisation by which man is separated from the other animals, the impossibility that he should be descended from any ape with which we are now acquainted, the beginnings of human society, which, in common with most modern sociologists, Herder traces to the mother rather than the father, the basis for man’s hope in a future state and a kind of vision of immortality; all this I have omitted, chiefly because such things are to be found in Herder’s other works or in contemporary authors, especially of the English school, and I have only sought out what I supposed to be most distinctive and significant in the *Ideen* itself.

So far all is simple and straightforward enough, but it is necessary to add in warning, that Herder is frequently led astray unconsciously from his own theory by inevitable preconceptions, which serve as another proof that he was really blind to its full significance. Thus the work contains contradictions that need careful sifting. After all he had said about development, it still might be argued from certain passages that he supposed the various degrees of organization were not developed from each other by a gradual process, but appeared suddenly and apparently spontaneously when the time was ripe.¹ By a similar misconception he frequently stoops to what is awkwardly called teleology; for instance, he describes the elephant, the lion, and man, as specially endowed with certain organs for definite purposes;² which is now seen to be a fallacy of beginning at the wrong end.³ Again, in his unwillingness to seem to make nature cruel and inhuman, he is often led to underrate the universal

¹ Book x. chap. 2. But it would be possible to interpret the passage otherwise.

² Book iii. chap. 3.

³ Herder’s mistake need not, however, surprise us when we remember that even the *Origin of Species* was at first greeted as a proof of teleology.

struggle for existence,¹ though at other times he sees clearly enough that this struggle is essential for his theory, for without it development is impossible. Such contradictions are likely to confuse the modern reader and lead him to depreciate Herder's services to science, but if we can simply regard them as inevitable relics of a previous stage of thought they will not seem to diminish much from the value of the work.

The historical side, to which we may now turn, is much simpler, and the general tendency of it may be more briefly explained, for in one form or other it has appeared in many of Herder's earlier works, though for clearness and breadth of view the *Ideen* surpasses them all. Having once brought the history of the world down through the course of long ages to the appearance of man, he begins the Second Part with an account of several of the most primitive tribes of which he had any knowledge—Esquimaux, Laps, Tartars, Hindoos, Negroes, “the happy, peaceful nations that dwelt by the Mountains of the Moon,” Peruvians, and Red Indians. Then, as though he had made a false start, he goes back to trace the growth of mind and human customs, “not as a metaphysician with an abstract, preconceived notion, but throughout as a natural and historical philosopher.” This leads him to episodes on comparative mythology and law, on government and war, and the origin of skill and art, on the fluctuating standard of happiness, the gradual education of the human race in all that tends to humanity, and on the importance of the individual;² there is even a long passage on geology and the development of organisation again, which leads him naturally to the ancient Asiatic myths of Creation in China, Persia, and Judæa.

After this episode, which was perhaps inserted to point out

¹ Book viii. chap. 4, for instance.

² Book viii. chap. 5. Two sentences deserve special mention: 1st. “Let us thank Heaven that it did not make the earth a lecture-room for learned sciences.” 2nd. “The State can supply us with artificial instruments for the good of the individual, but unfortunately it can deprive us of something far more essential, it can deprive us of ourselves.”

the incalculable gulf between man and beast in spite of all resemblance, the great procession of mankind—tribe after tribe, nation after nation, empire after empire, line upon line of vanished men and vanished women—begins to move before our eyes and rolls on with hardly a break from its dim source in the valleys of the central ridge of Asia, through fleeting light and dreary lengths of shadow, down to the dawn of the Renaissance, where the book abruptly breaks off.

The Mongol races, China, Thibet with its Lama pope, Japan, the Hindoos with their Vedas, Assyria, Persia and Zoroaster, the Hebrews, Phœnicia, Carthage, Egypt—all have their peculiar character, their influence and place in the ever-flowing stream, the unbroken chain of the spirit of man. The religion and manners of each are briefly described, very much as Hegel has described them in his best known book; most space is of course given to the Egyptians, with whom Herder had peculiar sympathy, and to the Hebrews, who are on the whole regarded in an unfavourable light, chiefly because he considers that their ancient sacred books have been a hindrance to knowledge, for their laws and sayings have been universally applied, without regard to time or place. “With Greece the morning breaks,” and the account of Greek life and history is evidently written with the keenest enthusiasm. Goethe liked this chapter the best in the book, though he was ready to say, “Yea and Amen” to the whole; even the scholar Heyne expressed his admiration. Rome, of course, follows, and the account seems at least as excellent, though it is unavoidably wanting in that loving delight, that inexpressible yearning with which all ages will for ever turn to the short, bright life of Hellas. No one could better express the mixture of horror and admiring awe with which we approach Rome. No one has better grasped in a few pages the spirit and meaning of it all, the terrible throes and pangs that went to produce the flower of Rome, her law and her empire. It may be noticed, too, that, like the modern historian, Herder strongly insists on the influence of early

Etruria, its art, religion, and constitution, and is most enthusiastic in his praises of Cæsar, by whom he believes Rome might have been saved when the senate fell before the mob, and the empire did not yet lie dying of the sword, "on the death-bed where she rolled in agony for centuries."

The contemplation of this prolonged death-struggle naturally leads to a digression on historical pessimism. "Is there, after all, any advance?" sighs the despairing historian; "I can see God in nature, but is it possible to see God in man?" Whereto Herder triumphantly replies that man is part of nature; man is continually trying to make what best he can out of his surroundings, and thus he has built systems out of chaos, freedom out of tyranny. The chain of civilization is secured by the wonderful symmetry of human reason, the symmetry whereby all noble minds tend to think the same. And again, says Herder, we walk by falls; nothing can exist without some principle of good, as Plato and Spinoza had taught us before. And yet man must be content to be a child of his time; we cannot make a period to please ourselves, and even the Middle Ages cannot be brought back: "for what can happen, does happen; and what can operate, does operate."¹ The whole of the fifteenth book is occupied with the discussion of these questions, and various proofs of man's necessary advance in reason and all that is distinctive of humanity.

The fourth and last part begins with an account of the teeming hordes of Northern and Central Europe during the first centuries of the Empire—the Gaels or Celts of Britain, the Basques of Spain, the Gauls, the Cimbri of Wales and Cornwall with their legends of Arthur, the Prussians and Fins and cold dwellers in the North, the Magyars, the Slavs, and the great German nations; finally the Arabs and Turks. ("What business in Europe," he exclaims, "have these foreigners, who, after a thousand years, are still determined to remain Asiatic bar-

¹ Book xv. chap. 3. But the language in this book is often "teleological."

barians?" To which we might reply, "The business that they are still there.") But the influence of Arabs and Mahomedans is not traced as yet, for Herder was obliged to stop to take account of the event of history, the appearance of an obscure Jew, proclaiming that national worship was over, that the kingdom of God was at hand, a kingdom of spirit and of truth.¹

Herder's sketch of early Christianity, the causes of its irresistible power, and its influence on every phase of European thought, is extremely brilliant and very curious. On the whole it is unfavourable: it is sometimes harsh and bitter. Nor need this surprise us; to many artistic and poetic minds there is something inexpressibly repulsive in "the Early Church." It is to be feared that such people would at any moment readily exchange all the edification of the blessed Fathers for one glimpse of the bright limbs of Aphrodite, one joyful line from the eternal poets. It is hard for them not to feel oppressed by the dreary unloveliness of centuries of Christianity. Herder, at all events, was overcome with dismay, as at a ghastly spectacle. He dilates with bitterness on the childish submission, the intellectual depravity of the Early Church, the "pious frauds," the disappearance of true history, the growth of tiresome and absurd ceremonies, the asceticism and loneliness, the hermitages, the inhuman worship of virginity, the system of charity,² the impossible speculations, the depreciation of life, the frantic fanaticism of martyrs. In the Eastern Church, after the remark that "the name of heretic was unknown to the philosophy of history, for all was of equal interest," he traces the growth of the various sects, according to their mixture with Buddhism, Zoroaster, or the Platonism of Alexandria. He is merciless on the grim and

¹ The account of Christianity is given in Book xvii.

² Book xvii. chap. 1. "If human society be considered one large hospital, and Christianity its common alms-box, a depraved condition of morals and politics must necessarily ensue."

barren disputes of the schools, and the weary dullness into which Asiatic Christianity sank, dragging with it all arts and science, literature and morals, till the whole thing was swept from the earth by the living power of Mahomet.

Turning to the West, he pursues the history of Rome as a centre of a Church and a new Christian mythology; and—after some chapters on Alaric and his Goths, the Arab invasion of Spain, the Vandals and Genseric, the sack of Rome, Attila and the Huns, the Lombards, Pepin and Charlemagne and the conquest of Germany, the Saxons, English, and Normans, the customs of the German nations and the growth of feudalism—he returns to sketch the constitution of the Roman Church, the sources of its power, and its influence on government, art, and trade. After another digression into the East, to witness the foundation of the Arab power, the burning of the libraries, the glory of Bagdad and Fez and Tunis, and the irruption of the Turks, he returns to the growth of Venice, Genoa, and the Italian States, the origin of chivalry among the Arabs in Spain, the Provençal poetry and the romances of France, and so he reaches the Crusades, of which he can hardly be sufficiently contemptuous. Finally, he touches upon the beginnings of the age of enlightenment, the appearance of Manichæism in Bulgaria, the Waldenses, Huss and Wickliffe, the school of Paris and the translation of Aristotle, the search for secret science, the growth of jurisprudence and architecture, the discovery of the compass and printing and gunpowder and the musical notes; and there, at one of the most thrilling points of the world's history, the book ends, and of the next and concluding part only the very barest outline was drawn out.

The *Ideen* was received with every sort of criticism, but a few typical instances may stand for the rest. Goethe, as we have seen, was enthusiastic in his praise, and indeed his influence on the whole book cannot be overrated. Hamann admired heartily, but with some caution, fearing that hardly room enough was left for the supernatural; and in a letter he warned Herder

that "our philosophy must begin from Heaven and not from an anatomical lecture-room and the dissection of a corpse." Mendelssohn, on the other hand, was much alarmed lest this should mean another outburst of Christian enthusiasm (*Schwärmerei*), a fear that turned out to be entirely groundless. Forster commended Herder for being on the right physical path, and noticed the beauty of his principle of uniformity of structure throughout nature, but opined that he had been led astray at times by ignorant naturalists and had represented nature as too human. Unfortunately, the most unfavourable of critics was no less a man than Kant himself, and we must trace to this the beginning of many troubles. Kant even went so far as to publish a sketch of a philosophy of history himself in opposition to Herder's, in which he maintained that the forms of organism were fixed and that the aim of man was civil society. In the *Ideen* he felt the want of logical accuracy and the customary divisions of principles; he calls the book a collection of hints rather than cool judgments, and hopes that for the future the author will restrain his imagination; he objected to "the unity of organic force" as confusing, and beyond scientific observation; he mocked at the whole of the second part, observing that from the descriptions of travellers one might prove anything one chose.¹ Finally he asked: "Herder is not content with other systems of philosophy; is this then to be a pattern of philosophy?" After Kant Gleim cannot be called a critic, and it is hardly worth while to chronicle his ready ecstacy, how "he was content to prolong his life that he might see the revelation of Plato-Herder"; how he exclaimed, "Herder, Herder is my hero; I am his first reader." The kindly old lamb.

To the modern reader it is plain that the book is far from perfect; indeed the scheme is too bold and vast to admit of

¹ And indeed Herder's capacity of reception is sometimes startling, *e.g.* book vi. chap. 4: "A negro child is born white." "A hundred children are nothing to a negro: an old man lamented with tears because he had only seventy." Such facts seem hardly strong enough to support theories; though, for the paler colour of negroes at birth, see Darwin's *Descent of Man*, vol. ii. p. 318 (1871).

perfection; even now such an attempt after a lifetime's labour can be no more than approximate. Some of the faults were inevitable, some are surprising. As the most notable instance of these latter, I should take his brilliant account of Christianity, in which we miss something of that historic sympathy wherein Herder seldom fails. In his natural horror at the first ten centuries of Christianity he does not really go to the heart of the thing. He attempts to sketch the causes of its power, but he makes weakness of them rather than strength; and yet Christianity has proved itself strong. In his yearning for the vanished joys of art and song he forgets the huge sickness of the nations; he forgets how welcome the free joys of the infinite spirit, however exaggerated, must always be after the maddening tedium of temporal aims and material enjoyment. The mistake was very common at the end of the last century, and has been common since, though we have seen many reactions. Herder evidently wrote whilst he was fresh from the influence of Gibbon's inimitable irony, and indeed he speaks in defence of Gibbon in terms of warm eulogy. This phase is best illustrated by the corresponding period of Goethe's life. Writing in admiration of this passage, Goethe went still further to abuse Christianity, and regret the Pagan past. It was indeed a period of much dreary talk about art, especially Greek art; but we have seen that Herder could free himself from these trammels; and we should have expected him to remember that, but for those long centuries of torpor, art could never have risen, as she did rise, with a new and ethereal splendour on her radiant wings. Therefore, even from the point of view of art, he was wrong; and the point of view of art is not the only possible.

But in spite of all defects the book remains a great work. His method is purely inductive and works by experience: as he says, "We will lay all metaphysics aside and stick to experience and physiology." His aspect of history may therefore be called singularly modern; he does not start with a preconceived theory that he is bound to prove. His history has really no central

idea like Lessing's¹ before him, and Hegel's after, much as he resembles both in many respects. He does not venture to assign any definite aim for human history, or, if such there be, it is merely the development of all that is most characteristic of humanity. He is content to show things as they were, and must necessarily have been; to watch the slow growth of nations and manners and religions, asking only the reasons why each was strong and not the objects of their strength. "Why did the enlightened Greeks exist in the world"? he asks; "because they did exist, and under such circumstances could be nothing else but enlightened Greeks."² By such a method we of course lose something of the enthusiasm with which we follow out a theory like Hegel's; but it is the scientific method. In the *Ideen* we see pass before us as in a glass all the sorts and conditions of men, all the nations of the world and the glory of them; they have passed over the world as a summer's cloud, and as a summer's cloud they are gone; and yet are not gone, for we are they. Can such things be without our special wonder?

It may be said that I have written these three chapters on purpose to prove that Herder was neither a priest, nor a poet, nor a philosopher. If that is proved, I shall be neither surprised nor dismayed, for in the ordinary sense of the terms I should call him none of these. But in fact I did not wish to prove anything, but merely to unfold and reveal. I shall be quite satisfied, therefore, if it has been shown that Herder had some skill in choosing out the leading threads in the tangled skein of life. To myself, this skill of his appears more and more wonderful the more I consider the history of the last hundred years. When we remember how complex the present always is, how vague the forecast of the future, how much that promises well will be fruitless and much that is weak will put on strength,

¹ In *The Education of the Human Race*. The book is often referred to, but, after watching the course of Herder's life, I am inclined to think its influence on his mind has been exaggerated.

² Book xiii. chap. 7; see also book xiv. chap. 6.

it seems a great thing to say of a man that he grasped the lines of thought which the future would follow; lines of thought, too, that in many cases were to be obscured and remote for full fifty years after his death. For this cause I should liken Herder to a diligent sapper and miner, whom the hosts of wisdom will follow, and, as they follow, forget.

And now we may hasten down the hill, for the day is far spent and the sun is dying in the heavens.

CHAPTER XVI.

ITALY, 1788—1789.

“ ‘Dust and ashes!’ So you creak it, and I want the heart to scold.
 Dear dead women, with such hair, too—what’s become of all the gold
 Used to hang and brush their bosoms? I feel chilly and grown old.”

A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI’S.

It is again the sixth of August, 1788, and the lumbering carriage—with Herder inside and his servant Werner probably perched up at the back—is making its way out of Weimar along the high road for Erfurt westward; whilst Karoline sits weeping in the unchanging rooms at home, the children round her in the hush and self-satisfied importance of childish sorrow: O it was the worst day of her life; “worse than when her mother died;” how could she bear to look at his coat and hat hanging there, all loose and empty?

For a full account of this journey we must again thank the ever-faithful Düntzer, who obtained from Herder’s grandson in St. Petersburg all the original letters between Herder and his wife during these eleven months of separation, and published them with only a few slight omissions in 1859.¹ Some insufficient extracts had been thrown in, as well as Herder’s letters to his children, amongst the rough material that is huddled together in the second volume of the *Reminiscences*. But the picture is now tolerably complete, and the only trouble is that it falls into two parts—one of Weimar and one of Herder in his wanderings; and any one who has read a novel will know how annoying this division is. Yet we cannot get rid of it, for we are bound to follow Herder himself; indeed, the spirit in which a man

¹ *Herder’s Reise nach Italien* (Giessen, 1859).

approaches Italy is a tolerably fair test of his whole nature. And on the other hand, whilst it is pleasant to read letters from Karoline once more, and to see what time has done for her, the greatest interest of all is the account she has given of Goethe, by occasional hints and quotations, during a period that is otherwise very little known, a period which fixed the second great turning-point of his life. For whereas the first season of growth began from Herder, was marked by the Frau von Stein, and had Life as its watchword, this second began from Italy, was marked by Christiane Vulpius and Schiller, and its watchword was Art.

In reading Herder's letters during his travels it is impossible not to compare them with the accounts given by Goethe of a journey over much of the same ground two years before, and by Heine some forty years later. When, however, it is remembered that Goethe built his story himself out of the letters he had written, re-arranging it all and ruthlessly suppressing much, till the whole became that strange mixture of cheerful freedom and barren pedantry, depths of wisdom and stretches of inhuman dullness,—when we remember, too, that Heine deliberately wrote his account for publication, whereas Herder merely wrote private letters and never had a chance of revision,—we shall be careful how we venture into the slippery regions of praise and blame. Accordingly, though the comparison would be interesting enough, I content myself with two remarks of Goethe himself. After Karoline had read him a few of Herder's earlier letters he was struck by the clearness and especially the variety of his observation, whereas "he himself had only seen one thing." Again, in a letter to the Frau von Stein, he notices how much more human Herder's letters were than his own. As to Heine, I think it may be said that though Herder has little of that young-eyed enthusiasm and irresistible humour, he has nothing of the rather startling freedom, the occasional coarseness even, with which, in his account of Italy, Heine approaches natural details about which ordinary people are agreed to hold silence.

From Erfurt Herder's way was still due west to Gotha, where he was entertained by von Frankenberg, whose wife we

may recognise as another of those tender, sad, and sickly ladies of whom we have seen so many. Like all of this kind she felt an instinctive attraction to Herder, and is mentioned again and again in his letters as a kind of blessed moonbeam; it seems indeed that from her side at all events there was something deeper than the ordinary interest of friendship, but in the prevailing atmosphere of those days it is impossible to follow these subtle distinctions exactly, and we can only say that she wrote kindly, though "with some reserve," to Karoline, and sent munificent presents at Christmas for the children, whilst Karoline for her part was inclined to be a little jealous at first, but afterwards, reproaching herself for her suspicions, was of course all the more enthusiastic in her praises.

At Gotha the road turns at right angles to the southward; and, crossing the loveliest hill region of the Thüringen Wald, amidst pleasant scenes of pastoral life and mountain simplicity, Herder proceeded through Meiningen and Coburg, and emerged on the broad fertile country of Bamberg. Here he was in a Roman Catholic town, and the college for priests caused him much amusement; for they maintained the Faith as sturdily as the ignorant, but at the same time boasted their enlightenment and culture. As proofs of this and also from natural politeness they were very anxious to display to Herder their knowledge of his own works, and a candidate for the doctor's degree produced a thesis in which he had remarked that "he differed from Herder on this point"; but as only one succeeded in getting so much as the title of one of his books right, and the rest talked about *Human Ideas*, instead of *Ideas for the Philosophy of the History of the Human Race*, it became only too evident to Herder that these, like the rest of mankind, got their knowledge of books from scraps of reviews, and that this was fame.

At Nuremberg he stayed about a week with much content, being well received by the notables of the place, invited to concerts and garden parties, and altogether treated as a man of letters who might reflect credit on his exhibitors. Any annoyance these interruptions caused him was compensated by the old town

itself, its walls and roofs and churches, and glimpses into a far-off German age. Here he learnt Albrecht Dürer, and only here was that possible: "He is the painter I should like to have been," he writes, so that even on the edge of Italy we see how German he remained in heart. Whilst he was here, too, he met young Vulpius, the brother of Goethe's Christiane, and saw Goethe's letter of recommendation, that was the first cause of so much. Before going on to Augsburg Herder turned aside for one or two pleasant days of patriarchal simplicity with Knebel's family at Ansbach. He was charmed with the sister, "as gentle as a dove," but not so fair,¹ but was especially delighted with Knebel's younger brother Max, so fresh and merry he seemed. Within two years this cheerful Max had shot himself in a wood, almost at his brother's side, and there was an end to his merriment. It may be remembered that at Ansbach too dwelt good old Uz, once hailed the Anacreon of girls and wine and roses, but now long departed from all such wild and reprehensible ways. It would have been interesting to watch the meeting of the two; but we only know that, though he regarded Herder as an "incorrect writer," he parted from him with tears—the first tears the Knebels had ever seen him shed, for indeed he was "as cheery as a boy, in spite of his age."

Hurrying away from Ansbach, Herder was accompanied by Knebel's brother, the good-humoured and suicidal Max, as far as Augsburg, where his journey, hitherto so fresh and pleasant, took a sad change for the worse, that almost ruined all. It had been agreed that at Augsburg he was to meet his travelling companion, the Canon von Dalberg, and accordingly he found a letter announcing that Dalberg would arrive in a day or two, and was bringing an "agreeable and unexpected present." The same evening a clergyman called and informed him—we can imagine with what becks and shrugs—that the reverend Canon of Trier, Speier, and Worms, was to be accompanied on his

¹ She afterwards came to Weimar, chiefly through Herder's influence, and was governess to the Princess Constantine.

journey through Italy by a thing of a widow, a Frau von Seckendorf, whose husband had died two or three years before, overwhelmed in debt through her extravagance. Here then was a pretty present from a priest to a parson; unexpected at all events it was, for, though Karoline seems to have had her woman's suspicions, Herder had supposed the lady safely banished to some baths or other. She had passed through Weimar in the early summer with Dalberg, and had been kindly received by the Herders as his friend; for she, like Dalberg, had a capacity for music in the midst of all her frippery, and seems to have set to music some of Herder's own verses. And now as she was definitely coming Herder determined to make the best of it; he even fancied for a moment that she might be an advantage; and at all events "he would take offence at nothing that crossed his path on a journey."

This is all very brave, but the actual too often blunts the bravest point; and with the arrival of the friendly pair the first glow of freedom and joy faded from Herder's journey. The very beginning did not promise well. A friend of Dalberg's had come to meet them at Augsburg, and Herder was led to infer from their conduct that the lady had greater powers of affection than discrimination. Dalberg, being a good easy man of twenty-eight, accepted everything as it came with the most enviable indifference. The friend, however, having departed, all went smoothly enough as far as Innsbruck, though the lady was "rather shy" at first, as one might suppose, and Herder already began to sigh for his freedom. But before Botzen the state of things was fast becoming unbearable. It rained steadily all through the Tyrol; the party were uncomfortably crammed together in the carriage, Herder facing the other two, and thus dragged backwards into the land of hope. "The lady," Herder writes, "had even the impertinence to consider us a nuisance, though it was she who has ruined our journey." In spite of her extravagance she was incessantly haggling over trifles to the discomfort of every one; what was worse, she could talk of nothing else, being sadly short of wits, the poor thing, and going

into Italy "more devoid of everything than ever human creature went before." Dalberg followed her like a child; to Herder she tried to be polite and condescending enough ("for which the devil give her thanks," he growls), and he flattered himself that he showed no outward sign of impatience; but he was thoroughly wretched, and determined to pay for his own coffee and other necessities in future, to leave the others as soon as possible, to stay in Rome as long as his own money would last, and then to hasten back.

The lady, however, was not the only thing to blame; to be forced into the company of a foolish woman was bad, but the real misfortune for Herder was that he had to go in company of acquaintances at all. The beauty of travelling is that, for the time, the traveller can escape his limitations and become a universal man. He is free of the dead. The desire in entering a strange new land, a land like Italy, is to become something as strange and new, to throw off the tag-rag of the old self; but this is impossible if on every side we are called by our dull old names, and reminded of our dead old passions and our buried associations. Before people hold Herder up to blame and pity for ill-humour and discontent they must take account of this. For this is unconsciously at the root of that wise carefulness with which travellers seek to avoid each other. When we touch Italy what do we want with the door-plates of our native street?

After Herder began to pay his own expenses the party felt more at ease, and reached Verona in comparative calm. Here they found the Grand Duke's mother, the dowager Amalia, who was travelling in Italy with her chamberlain, Friedrich von Einsiedel, and a few other courtiers, and had been only a few hours ahead since Innsbruck; but the two parties did not meet till they reached Rome. Herder's servant, Werner, was inconsolable at coming amongst all these chattering foreigners, and losing the use of his tongue; his master was almost as mute; and, as the party could make up but little Italian amongst them, the lady's difficulties in haggling must have been much increased,

till at length an interpreter was procured. At Verona, and at all the other places at which he stopped, Herder studied all the usual sights, the works of art and antiquities, that people gave themselves time to see then, and many see now. Sometimes he gives short descriptions of the most notable things, but he does not allow much space for description and art-criticism, and we will allow none. He also saw the people, a sight which the enthusiastic traveller generally omits.

From Verona they proceeded rather hurriedly to Ancona by way of Mantua, Bologna, Faenza, and Rimini, where one morning at sunrise Herder came once more upon the sea with its memories of youthful days in Riga and its mystic legends, no longer now of Flying Dutchmen and North Kings, but of the living ships that steered themselves, and of the much-enduring man. The party was for the time on fairly good terms, and each politely took a turn at the front seat. Werner had recovered his spirits in spite of the unchristian language of the natives: "O, if the children were but here!" cried the faithful retainer, as he watched the fishing-boats skim by, glancing in the sun of Venice.

In Ancona they stayed a few days, and on the first afternoon Herder went to hear a famous missionary, sent from Rome by the Pope "to convert heretics." He discoursed to a vast crowd in one of the squares, and a very disgusting discourse Herder thought it—nothing but stories of women in the confessional, each greeted by a loud laugh from the audience. "This is their way of spending their time when there is no opera or play." From Ancona the road lay through Loretto to Spoleto, with its memories of Hannibal and the "gate of flight"; for the lady refused to turn aside to Perugia, probably ignorant that any one ever lived there. At Rene, near Spoleto, Herder entered the temple of Diana, that is still nearly complete. "The inner shrine," he says, "has been consecrated as a church by orders of a Pope, that it might be spared. I mounted the altar, as though I were mad, to the niche where the holy goddess had stood; but she was not there; a wretched daub of

the Crucifixion stood on the altar." And thus they came to Terni, and, having stopped one day to see the waterfalls, went on their way to Rome.

They entered the city that has been called holy on the evening of September the nineteenth, and lodged for the first day or two close to the Rotunda. Herder was much disappointed to find no letters, owing to some accident to the mails, which took about sixteen days to reach Rome from Weimar; for which reason the correspondence is often rather puzzling, for a fortnight will make a large change of feeling. His search for letters led him to Angelica Kaufmann, whom he found tender and gentle and ideal, living her quiet artist life, pure and peaceful "as a Madonna or pigeon"—or as one of her own pictures. She was now nearly fifty, and her acquaintance with Herder soon deepened into the strongest friendship. The first few days in Rome were spent in seeking for a dwelling-place, a very difficult matter, owing to the whims and sensibilities of the Frau von Seckendorf. At last an abode of sufficient magnificence was found, a suite for herself of five spacious apartments, all of which she used to throw wide open when she received visitors of station; two little rooms for the easy-going Dalberg; but what was to be done with this elderly parson Herder? Much to his relief it was agreed he must go elsewhere, and at last he found a home for himself and Werner in the Strada Condotti, a quarter much frequented by Germans, at the sound of whose homely speech Werner was as one new-born.

The next thing to be surmounted was the question that dogs every civilised man through life to his grave, the question of clothes. He had started with "a summer suit," that Karoline had ordered for him in Weimar, and, after some necessary alterations at Nuremberg, he had hitherto worn this and grey stockings. But now the winter was at hand, and, as the natives of Rome insisted upon taking him for a priest because he wore a good deal of black and had a bald crown, he found himself politely debarred from the galleries because he ventured in provincial garb within the holy city of the Popes. "I purpose to

think seriously about getting a black coat," he writes, "and will consult Angelica on the question." But he put it off sadly, for he had been so long looked after and managed in these domestic points that he confessed himself as helpless as a child. Karoline meantime was impatiently urging him to spare no expense for the sake of what was decent and due to his position : " I advise you to get one coat of violet silk, which is the colour of distinguished clergy, and another of black. Werner must not let you be without good silk stockings and good shoes." And again, " I entreat you to wear elegant clothes, according to the custom of the country, and not to forget pretty shoe-buckles ; to feel oneself at ease with others depends a great deal on the clothes ; I see this more and more." Indeed, this practical generalisation will remain true till the adult man acquires the discernment of very young children and the lower animals, before whom it is useless to stand upon dignity and the favour of raiment. Accordingly, by the end of October, Herder made his visits in the correct uniform of fashionable Rome.

During the first few weeks he was introduced into the circle of artistic friends—Moritz, Bury, Hirt, Rehberg, and the rest—with whom Goethe had lived in Rome. Hirt, a pedantic, dry little man, with a great barren knowledge of art and archæology, was engaged to conduct the party through all the sights of the city ; but, as Frau von Seckendorf was always tired out in an hour or two, and then required several days' rest before the next venture, Herder calculated it would take them more than two years to see anything at all. Besides, she was utterly ignorant of the whole thing, and maintained an exasperating indifference, unredeemed even by wit, when brought face to face with the most worshipful relics of history and art. What were the glories of Cæsars and the wonders of artists to her ? Artists and emperors were all dead as sure as she was alive ; they had hardly left a wrack behind ; but her suite of rooms was tangible and present, and to diminish a real duchess by her rivalry was worth the pains. For in October the Duchess Amalia arrived with her court, and was much sought after, especially by Frau von

Seckendorf herself, who was anxious to appear one of her greatest friends, that the joy of eclipsing her might be the sweeter. She even attempted to make a clique for the exclusion of Herder; but here she failed, for the Duchess always acted towards him with her usual good nature and respect, and was herself full of interest in all that might be seen and learnt.

But, in spite of her kindness, in spite of the courtesy of one of the cardinals, Monsignor Borgia, who introduced him to friends as "the bishop of his land," it was evident to Herder that his stay in Rome was likely to be a complete failure. Werner had been brought to death's door by sickness, and recovered but slowly. Herder himself suffered much from rheumatism and neuralgia whenever the sirocco blew, and the weather was for the most part rainy and miserably cold. But the worst of all was, that, when now at the age of forty-four he had at length reached Rome, he had to dance to the whims of a silly young woman, with her ailments and vanities, her miserable spite and dubious reputation. As he was supposed to be travelling at Dalberg's expense, he had to dine with them every day, and she treated him as a hired servant. He had to find out what they purposed doing each day, and was generally told that Dalberg was busy composing, or that the lady was unwell; and it was a curious case of "elective-affinity" that when the lady was unwell Dalberg was always unwell too. Add to this, that, what with Werner's illness, the purchase of provisions for morning and evening, and the inevitable incidental expenses of a stranger in Rome, Herder's own funds were falling very low, and Dalberg, who had promised to pay for everything, quite forgot all these grovelling details in the charms of his lady and the raptures of musical composition.

It seems to be the stock thing to find fault with Herder for discontent, self-made torment, and a carping spirit whilst he was in Italy, and he is held up as a contrast to Goethe, with his glorious serenity. It would be interesting to know how these critics, who so carefully fit the man to their theory of the man, would themselves have behaved under these circumstances. I

myself, at all events, find very much to admire in Herder at this time for his unwavering good nature and forbearance. In his letters to Karoline he constantly entreats her to say no word of all this to any one, not even to Goethe, and when she disobeyed he was really annoyed. Even to her he never said anything against Dalberg, but maintained throughout that he meant well, and was merely too easy-going and childish. For a long time he refused to ask anything of Dalberg for fear of giving him pain, and he never once reproached him for having brought the capricious Frau to spoil their journey, partly for the same reason, partly out of sympathy with the woman; once for all, she was there, and, as she could not be left, they must make the best of it. It is true that Herder felt his humiliating position very keenly, that he wished he had never started in such company, that Rome seemed to him little better than a grave, and real enjoyment impossible on such terms,—but this seems only to prove that he was neither a fool nor an inhuman angel. At last, under great pressure from home, he wrote politely to Dalberg, laying the true state of things before him, and informing him that, if he was to stay any longer in Italy, he must have a certain sum for his expenses and for the journey home. Dalberg promised this, and sent a small instalment; but things did not really go much more smoothly till one day, at the very end of October—Herder having been more silent than usual at dinner—Dalberg had the good sense to see for himself that the position was becoming absurd. He wrote kindly enough to Herder, repeating his promise of the money, though he had found his lady companion rather an expensive luxury, and advising complete separation for the rest of the journey. Herder accepted the terms with joy, and climbed to the top of St. Peter's with a sense of freedom to which he had long been a stranger.

Meantime letters had been coming in from Weimar. The few first from Karoline were full of dubitations: she feared she had been no true wife, she had not done all that she might have done, she had allowed the cares of this life to make her love commonplace; and, indeed, after fifteen or sixteen years, mar-

riage is likely enough to seem a matter-of-course relationship ; but worse than all else was the thought, "and now he is happier without me." All vain and foolish fears, as Herder constantly assured her, but it was long before they were quite set at rest, even with the help of a peculiar kind of divination, from which she often received courage. She possessed some book or other, called a "treasury" or "casket," or, more exactly, a "treasure-casket," apparently composed of quotations from the Bible ; this she would open at random for consolation, and, as she never failed to find comfort, some praise is due to the careful compiler, who had selected only consoling passages. Indeed, she went through life with an eye for omens : now it was a group of stars over a black cloud, now a chair that jumped up and down whilst she was combing her hair at night, or a great spider ran across her writing-paper, or a wind—"no common wind"—stirred the autumn leaves in the garden all day long. In such manifestations she must needs put some degree of faith, and, as she found it a refuge, no one can grudge it her. With dreams it was worse, for they generally made her sad and perplexed, and seldom boded any good. Goethe tried hard to deliver both her and Frau von Stein from "these accursed dreams," as he calls them, and with Karoline he nearly, if not quite, succeeded ; at all events, she could laugh at them, even if in her heart she still cherished a lingering respect for their potency.

For the rest we see from her letters that she and Weimar society generally were absorbed in two topics, the change that had come over Goethe and indignation against Dalberg for his behaviour to Herder. There were also rumours of war in the air, of Prussia beginning to move uneasily again, troops marching towards Denmark, and southwards none knew whither ; perhaps the emperor in danger again. But the war was not to come from that side next time, and the gossip of Weimar was not yet to be disturbed.

Before going further it may be well once for all to say in warning that Karoline's method of judging a man, though simple, was hardly scientific. It may be briefly stated thus:

“If a man shows kindness to my husband, if he admires him, if he speaks well of him, no praise is high enough for his moral and intellectual worth; on the other hand, if he is indifferent to my husband, if he does not further his interests, if he so much as hint a word against him, better were it for that man if he had never been born.” This formula she applied with remorseless consistency and all the impetuous fervour of her Electra’s soul. The consequence was that few of her friends escaped entirely, for no one could act up to such a standard at all hours; but fortunately at the least sign of repentance she was ready to receive the wanderer back into the fold. Unless this is remembered, people might call her changeable and flighty in her judgments, whereas in truth no judge of Hades could have been more unwavering. During Herder’s absence Knebel, who was afterwards her firmest friend, suffered most from this beautiful woman-creature;¹ but even Goethe did not escape unscathed.

At first he came to see her every other day or oftener, and he seems to have found much comfort in his “Psyche” of years gone by. He missed Herder more than any one else, and complained there was no one to speak to in Weimar now he was gone. But Karoline’s clear eyes were not long in seeing that all was not with him as it had been. She writes that he had taken as his motto the words, “If you hold your peace, help will come to you,” and she complains that he was hiding his real self, and for this purpose was constantly changing the conversation. Goethe had begun to put on what Karoline in a later letter calls “his coat of mail.” When he spoke of himself at all it was generally with sadness as of one “driven by despair.” In answer to a remark of Karoline’s he said, “Yes, I received *God* (Herder’s treatise), last year, that I might believe in none this”; and later on, in November, Karoline writes, “He is a riddle to me; he said, ‘For his own part he

¹ “And still the exquisite

Sea-thing stems on, saves still, palpitatingly thus,
Lands safe at length its load of love at Tænarus,
True woman-creature!”—FINE AT THE FAIR, p. 95.

had plenty of happiness—it streamed in upon him from every side; but for others he had no happiness’ ”; which is the saddest saying of all, and seems to me no riddle. The only strange thing about it is that most people can say the same. Karoline’s difficulty really was that it is impossible to be perfectly at ease with a man who keeps an important part of his life carefully hidden, and from July till about February Goethe did thus hide his intimacy with Christiane Vulpius. Karoline therefore had a vague and restless sense of groping after something she knew not what, and this uneasiness was increased by the marked coldness between Goethe and the Frau von Stein. This is not the place to enter upon this vexed question; the motives appear to me obvious enough; as to the right and wrong, the decision is more difficult, perhaps impossible, perhaps unimportant. We will only notice as curious that for a time the Frau von Stein’s suspicions fell upon Karoline of all women in the world, which only shows to what desperate explanations jealousy will drive such a nature. If Goethe spoke two words to Karoline in the theatre, there were those hungry eyes glaring at them both; at last he thought it more prudent to visit the house behind the church only once or twice a week. Yet in all her difficulties Karoline turned to him, and his kindness never failed; he followed Herder’s journey with the greatest interest, and gave what advice he could, urging him above all things not to be in a hurry, “for a man should travel not to arrive, but to travel.”

But unfortunately Herder had not much choice in the matter, and on this point there was boundless indignation in Weimar, especially against the poor Frau von Seckendorf, “for spoiling Herder’s journey, and bringing dishonour on the race of woman.” They said she was merely imitating the beautiful Frau von Werther, who went off to Africa after Einsiedel by a merry stratagem, as has been described. “Under what title does she travel?” asked one indignant wit, and the other ladies of Weimar had no hesitation in answering the question by a word that was rather explanatory than polite. But when Karoline heard that her husband had been deceived and was obliged to pay a large

part of his own expenses, her anger ran over. With their six children, their position in the town, their frequent illnesses, and so on, she had always some difficulty to make the accounts balance; they had already even contracted a considerable debt. And besides she had to send money "under Trescho's address" to Herder's sister in Mohrungen, who was to be brought by Hartknoch to live with them in the spring, her husband, the baker Güldenhorn, being fortunately dead; and after all this she had now to scrape together at least 100*l.* to pay for her husband's journey back. No wonder she writes with emphasis. She insists that Herder should tell Dalberg exactly how things stood; she even dictates the very words he is to use, lest he should shirk from fear of giving pain; she tells him the eyes of Germany are upon him, and it is not a time for them to play benevolent simpletons. In spite of Herder's injunctions she called Goethe to her assistance, and he was even more plain-spoken in his indignation. He wrote himself urging Herder amidst plentiful abuse of Dalberg not to give way to his good nature: "It is no joke to entice a man into a place from which he can see no way out." And to Karoline, after observing how most men were ruined by following out, or too strongly insisting upon their peculiarities, he added, "In this way Herder is now injured by his peculiarity (*Eigenheit*). No one will believe it, but his peculiarity is delicacy and complaisance, and now he is suffering from it. From the same reason it often comes about that afterwards in the wrong place he turns the rough side of his nature outwards." If we wanted Herder's character in four lines, there it is.

This excellent advice was not received very kindly at first; Herder was much annoyed that Karoline had told his difficulties to any one, even to Goethe. Nobody cares to be summed up in four lines; and, in answer to this, he wrote, "Spare your philosophy, my dear people"; for, as Karoline complained, he had a way of taking her praise for blame; and for the rest, like Theophrastus Such and every one else, he preferred to keep the lash in his own discriminating hands. Henceforth he often

speaks of Goethe with some bitterness, and with reproaches that might have been called entirely undeserved had not Goethe adopted a slightly patronising tone, that perfect tact or sympathy would have avoided. But that the advice took effect, and at last overcame Herder's natural delicacy, has been seen. He had now about two months of comparative freedom and delight in Rome. He soon moved to new lodgings, looking out on the Piazza Magnanelli, and he began to have conversation lessons in Italian; hitherto he had been able to speak but little, though with the cardinals he could of course converse in Latin. He saw much of the Duchess Amalia, with whom he had not been very intimate before; and he could now visit Angelica more often. But, beyond and above all this, there was his study of Rome and Roman life itself. And here it is probable that, if Frau von Seckendorf knew too little, Herder knew too much. He was overwhelmed by it; as he says, it is like a bottomless deep in which one gets no further, the more one struggles hand and foot. For, indeed, if it is true that all roads lead to Rome, it is conversely true that in Rome every road leads to the ends of the earth.

The best account of all that he saw in Rome could be made from four letters he wrote to his sons: to Gottfried, about his journey to Tivoli, the Anio, and places that Horace loved; to August, Goethe's favourite, on the statues in the Vatican; to Wilhelm, who was to have been an artist, on the great buildings; and, last, to little Adelbert, about the animals, both the living beasts in the fields and the unchanging shapes in stone and bronze. But to himself the whole place seemed little better than a great tomb. He was oppressed by the vastness of the reminiscences, he despised the modern solemnities of the Holy Mother as a theatrical mockery, and he regarded all these titles, the Monsignori, the Princes, and Princesses, as a bore. Unfortunately he was not introduced to the Pope himself, who might have impressed his stubborn mind. Even the Catholic Canon Dalberg failed in this duty, for the cardinal who was to have introduced him could not come; without the support of a cardinal he would

have had to kneel, and it was below the dignity of a cultured Canon to kneel in the presence of the Vicar of Christ. He therefore postponed the business, and proceeded soon afterwards to Naples with his unintelligent lady.

It must not be thought that Herder was altogether gloomy and ill-content. He could not escape the sweet spell of Italy, the delight of external life; he felt himself wrapt in pleasurable indifference; he knew, perhaps for the first time in life, the joys of complete idleness, the lazy contempt of all thought and struggle, to which he attributes the ruin of all the artists in Rome. "Italy," he writes, "and, above all, Rome have been to me a high school, not so much of art as of life." But this was only true in certain moods, and on the whole the effect of Rome was depressing, not only this time, but on his second visit as well.

It was with the greatest joy therefore that, early in January, he started for Naples with the Duchess and her retinue. The cold was intense, the orange-blossoms all covered with ice and snow; but that did not chill his enthusiasm. Naples was to him the place of all the world; here he could "imagine how it was possible to be a Greek"; it was like a new life after the gigantic grave of Rome. He lodged with Einsiedel, Amalia's Chamberlain, the brother of his friend. Here he met Meyer and Tischbein, the painter, who had accompanied Goethe to Sicily. He became very intimate, too, with the Archbishop of Tarento, who was afterwards kind enough to send a copy of Latin verses, that say more for his benevolence than his scholarship, to Karoline on Herder's death. As usual, Herder visited all the sights—Pompeii, Vesuvius, Avernus, Baïæ, and the rest—except perhaps Pæstum. But the sight one is inclined to envy him most was at a dinner given by the English ambassador, Sir William Hamilton, renowned antiquary and man of science; renowned in these days chiefly because, two years after this, he married Miss Emma Harte, who was then living with "the old coxcomb," as Herder calls him, and was very visible to Herder that evening, dressed in Greek costume, and posing in bacchanal

attitudes, after her manner. As Herder scoffed at her, she of course selected him out of the whole company as the object of all her most winning arts ; but they were of none avail against that solid German soul. He opined that she was "at bottom a very commonplace person, without any true feeling for what was sublime, or great, or eternally beautiful ; but such a she-ape [probably he merely means imitator] as never was." Herder was perhaps incapable of that flood of joy, that unspeakable benefit of mere beauty, from which we ask nothing more ; but it must be remembered, in his defence, that even Goethe, on his second visit to Naples, thought the woman a poor witless thing, charmed though he had been at first. Nelson and his coming were still ten years ahead. On Herder the only result of her blandishments was that he came away with a profound indifference to the whole "art of apery" (*Affenkunst*), which afterwards cost him dear ; and one of his greatest delights, even in his favourite Naples, was the discovery that "where everything is sensuous one becomes spiritual—a man seeks after something with his soul which he cannot reach with his senses."

After about six weeks in Naples Herder was obliged to return to Rome, chiefly because Dalberg with his lady had quietly stolen away, and, being very short of funds, was on the point of leaving Italy without paying his debt to Herder. Rome again seemed to him very dead and dreary, especially as he fell seriously ill. But, though the Duchess and others in Naples entreated him to return, he steadily refused, "being tired of travelling as an appendix." He accordingly remained in Rome many weeks, chiefly detained by Trippel,¹ whom the Grand Duke had commissioned to execute his bust in marble. Angelica Kaufmann, too, was anxious to paint his portrait, which was successfully accomplished. The rest of his letters from Rome

¹ This is the same Trippel who made the bust of Goethe ("idealised like an Apollo," Herder complains) which is now in the Weimar library. "Ah, how the ladies kiss it ! If it was not so heavy they would carry it away," cries the old attendant, posing beside it, because his own resemblance to Goethe is so remarkable. (Note of 1880). Herder's bust is in the same library.

are chiefly occupied with the praises of the gentle Angelica, his difficulties to get the money from Dalberg, whom he again positively refused to force for fear of hurting his feelings, and with reproaches against Goethe, who he thought had acted very inconsiderately in refusing some money, which the Grand Duke, with his usual generosity, had offered to contribute towards Herder's expenses.

A greater source of annoyance was that, in the new edition of his works which Goethe was just bringing out, the old skit of Pater Brey was still included. Karoline, also, felt this very keenly, and, in her usual impetuous way, she declared that Goethe was "*fatal*" to her, and she would see him no more. But, in a few weeks, she writes that she is quite at one again with Goethe; that she understands him better, how he feels his greatness, and is yet the best and most unchangeable of all. And then again, in another fortnight, she thinks that Herder is right after all; she is tired of Goethe's "despotism and hundred little vanities," and she is far enough from making a god of him; the contrast only heightens her love for Herder, with his "reality, his true and pure spirit, his sympathy with all that is suffering and good." And in May she has this significant sentence: "Goethe has fallen out of my hands for some time back, because he receives good men and ill with equal friendliness"; which is also a characteristic of the sun and the rain. But hardly a week had passed again when Goethe came to talk with her alone over his *Tasso*, at which he was then at work, and over her own difficulties. "O, how I blame myself," she writes, "that I doubted him for a single moment; his soul is true and manly throughout, and I am glad that you recognise this again in your last letter." And so she turns this way and that, according as Goethe succeeded in approaching her standard. Herder's tone sounds more consistent, but is hardly so true. In one passage he says, "The whole of Goethe's philosophy is repugnant to me; it is selfish, ungodly, unsympathetic, and a desolation to the heart." And again, after expressing his admiration of very much in the new edition of Goethe's poems, he adds: "I shrink

from a great artist who regards his friends and all that comes before him as mere paper to write on or colours to paint with." And yet this very thing may be called the true artist's token: "Into paint will I grind thee, my bride,"¹ not "my friends" merely "and all that comes before me," but my very heart of hearts. Here, however, we need only remark that these two sentences of Herder's might stand as text to all the volumes of adverse criticism and abuse against Goethe that have hitherto appeared, or are likely to appear. Herder was much displeased, too, on hearing of Goethe's connexion with Christiane Vulpius. Sometimes, however, his reproaches are too evidently the result of personal feeling, which it is hard to forgive in a man.

But before the half of Herder's second sojourn in Rome was well over he was met by a practical difficulty that makes a certain amount of irritation and perplexity pardonable in such a nature. This was nothing less than a proposal from Heyne that he should change his whole course of life, and come to Göttingen as professor of theology. It was now fourteen years since the dispute with the authorities of Göttingen, and probably most of Herder's orthodox opponents were dead or departed; for he himself had certainly not become more orthodox, though he was quieter, owing to a certain indifference to the whole thing. Coming to him in the midst of Italy, the proposal of a professor's life, and dreary theological lectures in a pedantic university town, did not at first sight seem attractive. On the other hand, the offer had its advantages. In the first place, the income was higher, though it was true that he could not ask his Britannic Majesty to pay off his debts, as the Grand Duke afterwards offered to do. Then again, his children could receive a better and cheaper education at a university town. If they had been all girls, the thing would have been impossible, he says; but now there was only little Luischen, and she was beginning to take kindly to spinning and the ways of virtue. Above all, he was becoming discontented with Weimar; he was

¹ See Emerson (*Nominalist and Realist*), who uses the line in a slightly different application.

“tired of princes that remain unreasonable children to the end”; he hated to think of his difficulties with the consistory; he imagined that his family was growing more and more lonely and forsaken in the town, and that no friend would really miss them. At Göttingen, also, there might be a wider sphere of work. He fancied he would have more time to himself, and more opportunity for study; at all events, “he had wandered long enough like a poor lonely hermit by the banks of the Ilm.” He now “merely wanted a workshop for the rest of his life, and that was not to be found in Weimar.” On the whole, therefore, he was inclined to accept, but he refused to decide anything, or even to think much about it, till he had reached home and talked it over with Karoline face to face.

She, for her part, was even more divided in mind. She wrote two or three times to Heyne, holding out no definite hopes of acceptance, but making sundry suggestions as to increase of income, and so on; for she knew well enough that her husband was not a man to push, as she says, and that, therefore, she must do the pushing herself, having six children already to look after, to say nothing of Herder himself. Yet she found it hard to tear herself from Weimar; she was probably more at home there than her husband, and saw more of their friends—at all events, every one was urging her not to go; the Duchess Louise was full of sorrow at the thought; the Grand Duke was ready to make almost any offer in order to retain Herder for his court-town and his university in Jena. Goethe was most emphatic in his protest that Herder was far too good for a university life, and had no idea of the mean little passions of professors; for this reason he would not even have him go to Jena; and at Göttingen he would find at least as many envious tongues and hypocrites as in the rest of the world. Frau von Stein told her that Herder was now the life and soul of Weimar; and her most intimate friend Frau von Kalb was disconsolate at the thought of parting. The very sexton came and implored her not to leave her child's grave, on which the only roses of that year would soon be growing. All were eager in their entreaties

except one, her friend Knebel; and he seemed indifferent, or even anxious to be rid of them. Quivering with indignation Karoline clutched at the conclusion that he hoped to suck advantage from their departure. She thinks him a timorous, hesitating, untrusty creature, a false friend, a broken reed. "He stands on a slough," she writes, "and the motto I inscribe on him for the rest of his life is this, 'In doubtful case the doughty friend is seen: *Amicus certus in re incerta cernitur*'"; a quotation which she hurls at poor Knebel in three several letters to Herder, and once face to face, with a pardonable pride. "On the whole matter he has not spoken a word to me nor asked a single question; so he may wait for an answer" (*er soll auch warten*). One would hardly think that this self-same Knebel was to be her greatest friend for the rest of her life, and that she would soon turn with far more vehement reproaches against Goethe himself, for whom throughout this difficulty no praises seemed to her too high. Herder, on the other hand, strongly took Knebel's part, supposing there was some mistake, whilst his bitterness towards Goethe increases.

Thus does this unrelenting Electra stand at bay for the gods of her home; for the simple law that she followed was not of to-day nor of yesterday. In her later letters she feared to say all that was in her heart, for she had a suspicion that they were opened. At one time she saw much of Moritz, the art critic, who had been with her husband in Rome, and was now staying in Weimar for some months, engaged in the worship of Goethe. As the time for Herder's return drew near she became more and more apprehensive, and continually reminds him that he will find her no better than he had left her, a poor foolish woman at best, whom he had taken upon him as his cross in life; perhaps she had been nothing but a drag on him from the beginning; how much better if he had taken himself a woman of greater understanding. She was still tormented, also, by dreams, though she began to see that "dreams were not always prophetic." As a relief she wished to go as far as Karlsbad or Ilmenau, or at least to Erfurt, to meet her husband, instead of

waiting in changeless anxiety at Weimar. But this was not to be, and she remained in her place. She, too, put off all thought of decision about Göttingen till her husband should arrive, and for the rest kept as quiet as her nature would allow, Goethe continually urging her to do nothing in her "Electra style."

Meantime the letters from Rome were rather happier. Herder was now living there in such quiet contentment as was possible for him. He spent most of his time with Angelica, and his letters are full of her praises: "She is devoted to art as a lamb to the sacrifice," he writes with a metaphor that at first seems strange. The memory of her friendship was far the best thing he brought with him from Italy. For two or three wonderful days they were all at Tivoli together; but within a week or so, on the fourteenth of May, Herder left Rome behind and drove northwards to Florence, where he describes his delight at finding once more "the footsteps of men." After Florence he stayed at Bologna, and then was carried by water through Ferrara to Venice. He sent an admiring description of the town, with its palaces and gondolas, to his children; but he could not stay more than a week; and, hastening on through Milan, Innsbruck, and Munich, he reached Nuremberg early in July, after a terrible passage over the Alps in storm and snow. From Nuremberg he writes, "I am coming now, but not in triumph; so do not think of meeting me. Wait quietly till I come. I cannot go by way of Gotha: you must see that yourself. It is impossible for me,"—on account of that Frau von Frankenberg. Finally, he seems to have come by Saalfeld and Jena; and he reached home on the ninth of July.

On the way he had heard from Karoline that his oldest friend—the light-hearted, heavily-tried bookseller Hartknoch—had died suddenly on the very day when he was setting out to escort Herder's sister to Weimar: probably Herder's first thought was that there would be no one now to publish the fourth part of the *Ideen*. Herder had left his sister a happy maiden twenty-seven years before in far-off Mohrungen, and now he found her weak and sick, slowly dying of dropsy, as it turned out, but

carefully tended by his wife, who was only anxious to make their home a glimpse of heaven to the poor woman, "after she had been twenty-three years in hell." How great a change in this! For himself, too, what a change since that summer's day when he rode away from Mohrungen with the kindly army-doctor, whose very name was hardly remembered now! And there before him were his wife and six children; he had seen his beloved Italy, and had found that one always gets exactly what one takes, and not a pennyworth more. He was now nearly forty-five, and was sought after and revered throughout his land; he had become a name. But what profit should he get of the labour he had done under the sun? What profit he might get was of little or no consequence, so only that profit was somewhere; nor, to do him justice, did he ever account it of much.

CHAPTER XVII.

WEIMAR AGAIN, 1789—1802.

“ But don’t suppose the new was able to efface
 The old without a struggle, a pang ! The commonplace
 Still clung about his heart, long after all the rest
 O’ the natural man, at eye and ear, was caught, confessed
 The charm of change.”

FINE AT THE FAIR.

“ Over the ball of it
 Peering and prying,
 How I see all of it
 Life there out lying.”

PISGAH SIGHTS, 1.

WE need not dwell on Herder’s divisions of mind over the Göttingen question, having already seen enough of his difficulties in practical decision. In his own heart he was probably inclined to accept the offer, but then “those proud sirs of Göttingen,” as he says in a letter to Karoline, were so provokingly certain that he would come, that Herder’s spirit of self-assertion was roused ; for most people dislike doing what is expected of them, lest they should seem to fail in individuality. Besides, the inducements to remain in Weimar were very strong ; all his friends came forward in a body and implored him not to leave them ; the Duchess Louise was especially urgent ; the Grand Duke was ready to agree to almost any terms, and at once appointed him vice-president of the consistory ; he was informed that his work in Weimar was “a path of roses” compared to Göttingen ; Goethe represented that he was too old for so complete and sudden a change ; Karoline was certainly not anxious to leave her old home and little cluster of friends ; and accordingly, after keeping Heyne, who had proposed the appointment to the

Göttingen authorities, in a state of irritation and suspense till far into September, Herder sent in his refusal, and tried to reconcile himself to life in Weimar, "the unhappy mean," as he calls it, "between court-town and village."¹

I am inclined to think that this decision was a mistake, though it is easy to say this now. Herder had been in Weimar long enough, and a complete change of centre might have wakened him to new life and thought; for with such men change is often the same as progress, and they need the sharp strokes of fresh contact to bring the fire out of them. Weimar has been so sanctified by a soft halo of memories that we forget that even in Weimar life crept on from day to day much the same as anywhere else; people dosed themselves with coffee and gossip, and knew each other, and grew old, and read books, and died much the same as in any modern district that prides itself on its culture. And it does not follow that because people live in a cultured little town they are all on the narrow road to wisdom. The chances indeed are against them, for there is always the danger that they have mistaken their goal, and are running hard down the broad road to intellectual diletantism. How much of the occasional dulness and pedantry in Goethe himself is due to this pervading atmosphere in Weimar appears to me a very large and serious question. For these reasons it seems a pity that Herder did not boldly decide to go to Göttingen that the fire of life might be kindled anew, even though a university town is the last place we should naturally choose for this purpose. At all events he would not then have been haunted by laments for what might have been. For some minds it is easy to give up what are called pleasures, it is not very difficult to give up what is called happiness; but to have given up the chance which might have turned life into something fuller and nobler than it can ever be now—that is hard and is not soon forgotten.

Not many weeks had passed before he began to repent of his choice. All through the winter he was very ill; in the spring

¹ Knebel's *Nachlass*, vol. ii. p. 250.

melancholy seemed to be settling down on him, and then began that fatal cry, "O what a failure of a life" (*Ach, mein verfehltes Leben*), which never quite left his mind again. Absurd and contemptible though the lament would be from most men, few would have the heart to laugh when it comes from Herder, remembering how much he had done. Gleim had prophesied to Karoline that her husband would never come back from Italy, and now (May 1790) she writes in despair that the prophecy had come true, for only half of the old Herder, if that, seemed to have returned; and the next year he himself writes to Knebel that his life had become entirely common-place, and it seemed as though his spirit had vanished. Almost every winter he was afflicted with liver complaint or rheumatism, that year after year drove him to the wells during the summer months, either at Eger, Karlsbad, or Aix. On these visits Karoline went with him, but even when he returned in better health and spirits a few weeks of the consistory in the midst of his fellow-labourers for the gospel of loving-kindness were enough to bring back the old depression.

As vice-president it is true he was no longer obliged to preach every week nor to conduct the burials, but his work was not really lightened, for he had still to cope with the president, who, purblind before, and quite blind in 1792, was still in no haste to die, but for many long years continued to keep his blind watch over the consistory, till at length, in 1801, he ceased to cumber the ground, and Herder ruled in his stead. Worse than the president was a new regulation of 1789, whereby the consistory was deprived of its official lawyer, and left to stray in the legal maze like sheep without a dog. Nothing daunted, Herder at once set to work to study jurisprudence and case-law, but, however fascinating the subject may be, it is not surprising that it failed to soothe a man who approached it for the first time when he was nearly fifty, and was only eager to use every hour of the rest of his life to carry on his work in almost every other branch of literature or science but that. Besides, Herder had a strange theory about the administration of justice which must

have increased his difficulties tenfold. He considered that brevity was an advantage in legal proceedings, and was dismayed to find that cases of divorce and so on, which came before the consistory, often dragged their length through three or even five years, which would allow time for considerable matrimonial shuffling. Supposing that these things were not as they should be, Herder had a troublesome habit of bringing the trial to a decision during the first term, and it is not hard to imagine the baffled indignation of bench and bar and maundering clergy, who liked their bits of hair-splitting, to say nothing of their fees, and never saw things after this fashion.

Besides these legal and consistorial duties, which generally occupied two or three days a week, Herder's difficulties with the candidates for ordination steadily increased, as the Kantian fever extended. He was often examining from nine o'clock till six in the heat of summer with hardly a break. When we remember too that during these years Heinze, the most trusted of his schoolmasters, died, and Herder for a time took the duties on himself, we cannot wonder that in 1791 he writes to Forster, "I am so overwhelmed with business and work that I can hardly put on literature once a week as a Sunday coat." But in spite of all he worked incessantly at the art of his life whenever opportunity offered. By 1795 he had published two more volumes of his *Miscellanies*, his treatise on the *Resurrection*, and the fourth part of the *Ideen*, which was at last printed by Hartknoch's son in 1794. He had also written about half of his series of *Letters for the Furtherance of Humanity*, some of which may be regarded as a continuation of the *Ideen*, for they treat for the most part on European history since the Renaissance, but chiefly deal with the literary and artistic side, and are too often diffuse and common-place. The series came to an end in 1797. Under this stress of work and vexation his health of course grew steadily worse. He was cramped by melancholy and enervated by sleeplessness. He was powerless beneath the clutch of old age and its limitations. Before he was fifty he wrote to Jacobi, "I am very old now and grow older hour by

hour." We must remember this when we come to mention the enmities and polemics which have hitherto thrown a cloud over his high reputation. A new life was moving in Europe; the second revolution in Germany had begun; but Herder had allowed himself to grow old; and all who have grown old, even in years, will know how hard it is not to be afraid.

During all this time he was becoming more and more lonely in Weimar, partly through his own fault, partly of necessity. Karoline, it is true, still stood at bay over him, and never flinched; but even her strength was failing; she seems never quite to have recovered from the birth of her youngest child, Rinaldo, born in August 1790; and in her letters she too often speaks of ceaseless headaches and lassitude. It was well for her that, as she herself writes to Jacobi,—

Women can naturally suffer and endure more than men, and in reality we are not so particular to a shade. Mother Nature has wisely conferred on us this little cheerfulness as one of our wedding presents. . . . Still you ought not to judge too much from the kindly faces of women, for there is often beneath the surface something very different from mere cheerfulness (*Leichtsinn*).

She kept up a frequent correspondence with old Father Gleim and with Knebel, especially in later years, when Herder hardly wrote at all, or contented himself with adding a few words to her letters. In 1792, during their sojourn at Aix for the sake of the baths, they renewed their intercourse with Friedrich Jacobi, which had been broken off after the publication of Herder's *God*, and on their way home they stayed for some days with the Jacobis at Pempelfort; for those surprising French rebels had not yet driven the metaphysical sage to wander with his olive-branch of faith far up to the north (in 1794). After leaving Pempelfort the Herders also visited Johann, the illustrious brother of their old friend Georg Müller, at Aschaffenburg; and Herder returned home light of heart, only to fall into deeper despondency. He continued to exchange letters occasionally with Einsiedel and Forster, and frequently with Heyne, either to borrow books or to commend to his notice

some promising young student in the university. Gleim was ever constant and admiring; his kindly old commonplaces never failed; and we hear his benign voice at the beginning of this century like an echo from an age long dead. Knebel, too, from Ansbach, at the time of his brother's suicide, or from Jena, and latterly almost entirely from Ilmenau, was gradually writing his two hundred and more letters to the Herders; but he did not often come to Weimar, and letters are poor things unless life is breathed into them from time to time by living intercourse.

In Weimar itself the Herders began to see more of Wieland than heretofore; but, though Karoline speaks of him with the warmest praise, the intimacy was never great; and towards the end of the nineties he retired to his country-house a few miles from Weimar. Schiller was already established as professor of history in Jena when Herder returned from Italy; but they saw little of each other, though Herder wrote occasional papers for the *Horen*, Schiller's journal; and the animosity was not active and embittered till about 1796, when the *Xenien* began to appear in Schiller's new *Musen Almanac*. Voss, the poet, the founder of the Hainbund at Göttingen, came over once in 1794 from Halberstadt, where he had been staying with Gleim, and was received with enthusiasm by the Herders. They always watched for his works with the greatest interest, especially for his famous translation of Homer; for Herder was sadly coming to the conclusion that "we must warm ourselves at the fire of the ancients till better times come round."¹ Immediately after this visit from Voss the Herders themselves and some of the children went to visit old Gleim once more in his hospitable hermitage. They met again two years after at Eisleben; and throughout the old man's kindness was unbounded. At the time of the Herders' greatest difficulties as to the education of their six sons, Gleim, by some delicate manœuvre, caused them to possess an additional fund, sufficient, apparently, for the education of two. He seems almost to have adopted his god-

¹ To Gleim, 1793. The correspondence with Gleim is printed in *Von und an Herder*, vol. i.

child Adelbert, and to have found a post for him, for a time at least, in Halberstadt. Such pure-hearted kindliness would cover a multitude of mediocre verses.

But all such gleams of brightness, the friendships with the Duchesses and the Kalbs, and the Frau von Stein, now alone in her indignant sorrow, were but reflections of a dying glory, when the sun had set. After Herder's return from Italy the hardly-perceptible rift between him and Goethe slowly but inexorably widened, till within seven years the gulf was impassable. At first there seemed to be no change. In the autumn of 1789 Goethe was travelling in Eisenach and the neighbourhood of Weimar with his godchild August Herder, whom he continued to treat almost as his own son, looking after his education and encouraging his geology. Early in the next spring he stole quietly away, after his manner, to Jena, and then slowly southward to meet the Duchess Amalia at Venice, leaving to Herder the charge of his Christiane and infant son. From Venice he sent Herder the Venetian epigrams, and wrote in the old friendly way both to him and Karoline. But, as some man of old has told us, want of communication corrupts good friendships, and though this was not the only cause of the division it certainly contributed. For hardly had Goethe returned from this second journey to Italy when he set off again to Dresden, and so into the heart of Silesia, to join the Grand Duke in the camp at Breslau, where he stayed many months awaiting the issue of the uneasiness of the nations.

The air was full of rumours of war, insignificant as they all appear to us now; Prussia's new king was jealously watching the still newer emperor hardly yet seated on his throne; the grief of Poland was still shrieking out her impotent agony; the unknown factor of Russia was keeping all the rest in suspense for her next move, though Sweden had not patience to wait, but had dashed in upon her old enemy and was by this time silent, whilst Russia had leisure to turn her full attention on the Turks, and could slaughter them off by thirty thousand at the time (storming of Ismail, December 1790). And high over all men heard the

eries of a maddened people going up from Paris; and hearing this the Prussian king and Leopold of Austria thought best to come to terms at Pillnitz, and to postpone their differences till they had marched together into France to the succour of unfortunate royalty: was not the queen Theresa's daughter, and monarchy itself perhaps at stake? They did not know that in a few years it would seem a small thing who was king of the Romans, and whether Leopold or another was hailed emperor of the German Realm amid the blare of chivalrous trumpets in the old coronation town on the Main; neither did they know that this projected progress into France to reinstate suffering royalty was as when one begins to let out blood. Accordingly, the kings having determined to fight, Herder's best chance of life was gone, for, before Goethe could fall completely under the spell of Schiller, the renewal of the old friendship with Herder might have been possible. But now, during most of 1792 and the next year, Goethe was away with the Grand Duke besieging Mainz and camping at Marienborn and elsewhere, watching the progress of that surprising and instructive "campaign in France." During and after these years the letters to Herder have become very short indeed and few. By the end of 1794 the friendship with Schiller had left little room for the ghosts of the motionless past.

As we have come so near to France, we may take this opportunity to ask with what thoughts Herder listened to the thunders of those few quick years, which, to us, have come to seem the very aim and crisis of a century—the sharp birth-throes of a coming age. There are few things so astonishing to the modern reader as the blindness of Europe to the real significance of the Revolution. In North Germany especially the indifference seems almost grotesque; but for the history of the last hundred years we should call it sublime. Goethe himself tells us that people thought him mad for his excitement over the affair of the Diamond Necklace and the other faint beginnings of troubles: and yet critics are never tired of reminding us of Goethe's indifference to all political history. "We in the North," he

says again, "continued to live in a kind of dreamy security;"¹ and the truth of this is evident from every letter of the time. People went on with their bits of artistic criticism, their borrowings of books, their panegyrics of common-place verses, their tea-parties, and classical emendations, much the same as if all things were as usual just across the Rhine; as if no guillotine was palpitating with quick rise and fall in the squares of Paris. Five days after Herder returned from Italy the Bastille went up in smoke; whilst he was simmering in the steam-baths of Aix, or enjoying the serenity of Pempelfort with Jacobi, the prison-doors of Paris were red with the September massacres. Within a few months after this Danton had hurled down his gage of battle at the feet of the kings who stood up and took council together; and yet it is almost startling when in any of these letters there comes to us some short outcry of horror or some little sigh for the queen. No doubt the whole of Europe, including France herself, underrated not only the significance but the power of the Revolution. "The King of Prussia and the Duke of Brunswick are determined to be in Paris by the 25th of this month," Herder writes whilst the troops were beginning to assemble on the Rhine (August 1792). But this was not all; the German mind was benumbed by that inevitable indifference to what seems to lie outside our immediate sphere, indifference which is almost as clever an invention as sleep and forgetfulness, for without any of the three life would not be possible.

This being so, it is hard to follow Herder's view of the Revolution with any exactness, for he did not live long enough to estimate its true proportions from the height of distance. Like Wordsworth, and most liberal-minded men at the time, he seems to have hailed it at first with hope and delight, and then to have been gradually sickened by its brutality and madness, till in the end he classed it with Kant's philosophy as having delayed the development of humanity for at least a hundred years. He was clear-sighted enough to see throughout that no

¹ See Goethe's *Annals*.

good could come of the coalition of kings. After the siege of Mainz, in 1793, he wrote to Jacobi, "I wish all these hosts and powers would creep away into their holes; they are not the people to improve the anarchy in France"; and to old Gleim, who tried to work up some kind of patriotic enthusiasm and was meditating a new series of *Grenadier Songs*, he writes, "With the pride of Austria on one side and the brutality of France on the other, mankind can only sit and sigh. There are no laurels to be won in a war like this." Owing to disloyal sentiments such as these, and his well-known freedom in all kinds of speculation, he appears to have been branded with the then heinous charge of sympathy with the rebels; a charge which was only partially deserved, but caused him and his family some trouble. It seemed to be established by his close intimacy with Knebel, who sent him the *Moniteur* from time to time and was one of the few who dared to display some enthusiasm for the cause. But, in fact, Herder's one wish was for a renewal of peace, and during the last years of the Revolution he could think of the present only with sorrow and of the future with anxiety. Like so many others, he had thought that all might have gone on so quietly to the millennium, and now all the ideals for which he had staked his life seemed blighted by a blast of hell from France and a cloud of mad verbiage from Königsberg. For he had allowed himself to grow old and now could not save his soul from fear.

As an instance of his discernment it may be mentioned that he foretold Napoleon's dominion in Germany, and regarded it as the one means of arousing the Germans from their political indifference; "but he hardly believed this was quite so near," adds Knebel in his last published letter to Karoline (April 1806). Karoline herself greeted the Revolution at first with all the enthusiasm of her high nature. As late as November 1792 she writes to Jacobi:

The Sun of Freedom is rising, that is certain, and that this is not the business of the French merely, but of the whole age, you can see yourself in the letter to the Pope in the *Moniteur*. In Germany we shall still sit

awhile in darkness, but the morning wind is here and there rising into voice.

This comes so near the true ring of the cat-call Liberty and the Rights of Man, that Herder thought it necessary to add a postscript warning Jacobi that his wife was not really suffering from the delirium of Freedom, but remained a good German lady in this "*terra obedientiæ*." Three years later, when Frankfurt fell and her own land lay open to the enemy, her enthusiasm was much shaken by her fears; for love of country is strong, in spite of theories and the Rights of Man; and in 1798 she sums up the matter thus, in a letter to Gleim, with simple philosophy and diplomatic suggestion:

Abuse of might leads to abuse of might by whomsoever it is practised. It was thus that at the outbreak of the Revolution my feeling was *for* the French, and now, after their deeds of violence and pillage, it is firmly fixed *against* them. Beyond this I lament nothing, except that the Germans (I mean Austria and Prussia) have not the sense to appease the excited and raging lion by *wise negotiations* [all underlined in her impetuous way]; but instead of this are always stirring him up more, so as to bring misery on our heads. But now it is all confused and mingled, the higher and the lower together; the world is out of joint. When will the great war of the abuse of might have an end?

This may, no doubt, stand as the summary of the opinion, not only of Herder as well but of most thoughtful and true-hearted people during those years; only, unfortunately, when the lion has become rampant it is so hard to approach him with wise negotiations that are likely to have a soothing effect.

Returning to Herder's more immediate sphere in Weimar we find the breach between him and Goethe still further widened in 1794 by the publication of *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*. Chiefly under Schiller's advice it was now much altered from its first form of many years before, and Herder, who had hitherto chiefly regretted the "low company" with which it dealt, now found little to admire. His criticism in a letter to the Countess Baudisson of Holstein might almost be a page out of De Quincey's famous essay. He deplores especially the want

of what he calls "delicate moral feeling," and thinks this is the ruin of most of Goethe's writings.

"These Mariannes and Philines and the rest of the company, how I hate them all," he exclaims; and, he adds very significantly "Perhaps in no place in Germany do people depart so far from delicate moral conceptions—I might say the very graces of our soul—as here in Weimar, and thereby suffering mankind is deprived of the greatest charm of his life, and discords sadly false strike on the ear. But enough of this. In the book, as a whole, the old harper pleases me most. He's the man for me. There are besides very striking and acute remarks, but I cannot admire the web on which the whole is worked."¹

When we remember the unbounded enthusiasm with which Schiller welcomed the same book, declaring he could be friends with no one who did not admire it, we cannot wonder that Goethe felt himself all the more drawn away from Herder towards this new and ardent nature, so full of encouragement and counsel. The estrangement was further increased by Herder's bitter—almost petulant—opposition to Kant and all his works; for, though Goethe was no Kantist, and remained calm through all the excitement, he could not be blind to the enormous power of a system which such men as Schiller and Fichte hailed as a revelation. It was this premature old age in Herder, this mournful loss of sympathy with the present, which at last made further friendship impossible. This is best shown in a letter from Goethe to Meyer after the publication of Herder's review of German literature in the *Letters for the Furtherance of Humanity* in 1796. He says:

Friend Humanus has just given us another sad instance to what woeful issues arbitrary criticism necessarily leads, if once a man stoops to it, in spite of the highest understanding. In this account there is such an incredible sufferance towards mediocrity, such a rhetorical confusion of the good and the insignificant, such a reverence for the dead and buried, and indifference to the living and striving, that we must lament the condition of the author from whom so mournful a composition could spring; and besides, throughout the whole there is again the drone of that old half-true piece of Philistinism, "that the arts must recognise the law of morality

¹ Quoted in the Preface to Herder's *Nachlass*, vol. i. p. 20.

and subordinate themselves to that." The former of these things they have always done, and must do, because their laws spring from reason, just in the same way as the moral law; but if they did the second they would be lost, and it were better that we hung a millstone round their necks at once and drowned them, than let them die away by degrees into the dead level of utility.¹

It may be remembered that in younger days Herder had been one of the first to say all this himself, but now old age and fear and sickness had frozen his blood, and next year he bitterly complained to Knebel of the immorality in the *Bride of Corinth*, and other of Goethe's recent ballads. Neither would he take any part in the enthusiasm for the new theatre, for which Goethe had long laboured; it was opened in November 1798, but Herder alone was not there, and refused interest in the whole undertaking, having renounced all such pomps and vanities in his baptism, as he said with a flash of his old humour.

If we must fix a date for the final separation, it would be the appearance of the *Xenien* in Schiller's *Musen Almanac* of 1796. Herder himself was treated gently enough in these fierce protests against all dull mediocrity and commonplace, but some of his old friends—such as Gleim especially—were not spared.

Poor old Gleim was pitied as the worn-out Peleus, who had lost all the strength and speed of younger days;² and, though he himself bowed his head to the rebuke more in sorrow than in anger, and meekly answered in a little series, apparently in verse, called *The Strength and Speed of the old Peleus*, Herder took the whole matter very much to heart, and Karoline glowed with a fever of indignation. It was indeed natural that to the celebrities of the time the tone of the *Xenien* should seem hectoring and presumptuous; for who, they asked, were these two more than others that they should stand up and gird at "established reputations?" And to many it seemed a grievous thing. From this year onward Goethe and Herder hardly met at all, and apparently only on three occasions with any feeling of

¹ Quoted in Herder's *Nachlass*, vol. i. p. 23.

² See *Xenien*, No. 343, 344.

friendship, and these three were spoilt by accident and Herder's want of compromise. In 1797 Goethe writes to Schiller, "I heartily regret that the old man on Potter's Hill [now the Herder Platz] is condemned to stand in the way of himself and others on his own field"; and two years later Herder writes, that to his sorrow he has heard nothing of Knebel's translation of Lucretius, "because he has no connexion whatever with the two great columns, Jachin and Boas."¹ Do we get tired of hearing Schiller called great and Goethe greater? If so, the joke is bearable; and with this we may quit this sad subject for the present.

I have been obliged to anticipate a little for the sake of clearness, and now we can return to two points of light that served to relieve the general gloom in 1796; these were the completion of Herder's *Terpsichore*, or translation of Balde, and the meeting with Jean Paul Richter, the one supreme humourist Germany has given the world—unless we may account Heine a German and a humourist.

This Jacob Balde, poet or half-poet, was born in Elsass at the very beginning of the seventeenth century; and, leaving Elsass when it fell into French hands, he betook himself to Bavaria, and was trained by the Jesuits, then in the first outburst of their brilliant activity. He joined their order, and became ascetic and warlike; but devoted himself chiefly to the composition of verses in almost every style, but for the most part in Latin. As he published a book of Odes and Epodes, he was, of course, lauded as the German Horace; but had been almost entirely forgotten, as perhaps he deserved, until Herder discovered a copy of his works, and determined to bring him again to light in good German speech and the original classic metres. He began the translation in 1794, and Karoline tells us that he never worked at anything with such enthusiasm except the *Urkunde* and *Ideen*. He would begin on an ode after supper, and read it to her at ten or eleven at night, to the con-

¹ Knebel's *Nachlass*, vol. ii. p. 279.

solation and encouragement of both. The *Terpsichore*, which included some account of Jacob Balde, was received with admiration—not only by Goethe and Schiller, but by the nation at large; for, as Balde had written during the Thirty Years' War, he was now welcomed by the rising military spirit of the time; and even the modern reader, who can endure to be jolted in Teutonic speech over the metres of Horace, may find a certain interest in these odes, a historical interest mainly, but also a glimpse of almost a poet's heart struggling to blossom in the midst of a flat wilderness of sand.

Hardly was the *Terpsichore* published when Jean Paul came to Weimar. The sight of him is like the profound smile of a granite mountain bathed in sunshine. For here again was Nature's most gracious gift, the man who having looked the world to the heart can still laugh with love in spite of sorrow, partly even because of sorrow. "With bright eyes, not with wet," he says himself, "we must go on our way through life," and he will help us here to avoid dwelling too much on the gloom of Herder's closing years. Richter was now thirty-three, and his reputation already stood high. *The Greenland Law-suits*, *The Invisible Lodge*, *Hesperus*, *Siebenkäs*, and, quite recently, *Quintus Fixlein*, had been eagerly welcomed by an astonished people, by none more eagerly than the Herders. Karoline, writing to Gleim early in 1796, says that *Quintus* had been only a few hours in the house, but she had sat up reading it till far into the night, in spite of her weak eyes. Indeed, Richter had a strange and not always enviable power of making women love the author merely through his writing.¹ And it was through this cause that he now came to Weimar in June 1796, at the urgent entreaty of Karoline's great friend Charlotte von Kalb, who, after reading Richter's books, had come to the conclusion that he was much more worthy of such a soul as hers than was her own husband. This was probably true; but in our cooler

¹ The sad story of Maria Forster will occur to every one. She drowned herself for hopeless love of Richter, whom she had never seen; he was then fifty and the father of a family.

days there seems a certain want of delicacy in her courtship, and, when she insists in her letters that nature should suffer no restraint and love needs no laws, we can now see that the precept will not bear universal application. And yet she claimed Herder as her master, which only shows that perhaps after all he was not so far wrong in insisting so strongly on the moral laws, even at the risk of all else.

On the day of Jean Paul's arrival this lady took him to see Knebel, and, whilst they were in the garden, Herder and Karoline with two children entered. "I went to meet him, and under the free heaven I threw myself into his arms. I am now as familiar with him as with you," says Richter in a letter to Otto the day after.¹ It was chiefly in hopes of knowing Herder that he had come to Weimar. He had long regarded him as one of the three great watch-towers of German thought, and no one had so strongly influenced his own genius. He had already addressed Herder two or three times with petitions for recommendations to publishers and the like, but the correspondence had hitherto miscarried. And now after this meeting Herder's influence was to be more than doubled, and it continued through life. It would be impossible in a sketch like this to quote all the beautiful things that Jean Paul has said of his friend and master. They are the more significant when we remember that the friendship only began when Herder was long past his best days. Jean Paul might be called the last and in many ways the noblest of Herder's great works. They were both descendants of Hamann, but Jean Paul was the grandson. The points of resemblance between the two are striking, but the difference is even more significant. Each saw in the other something which he himself was striving after but could never reach; as, many years afterwards, Jean Paul said, "I could have become a great author with Herder's powers and my own application of the same." Through all their long and familiar intercourse his

¹ Quoted in the *Life of Jean Paul*, compiled from various sources, p. 212, in many ways an excellent work, obviously by a woman. (By a Mrs. Lee of Brooklyn, in fact; see *Carlyle and Emerson*, vol. ii. p. 20.)

admiration never flagged, and the year after Herder's death he introduced a long passage in his praise into the *Introduction to Æsthetics*, written with all his enthusiasm and penetration in that gorgeous style which Herder easily learnt to parody.¹ It is quoted in the *Reminiscences*, but the following brief extracts must here suffice :

This noble spirit was misjudged by the most opposite times and parties, and that not entirely without his own fault ; for he had the failing that he was no star of the first or any other order of magnitude, but a cluster of stars, out of which every one spelt out a favourite star-form for himself. Men with several kinds of power are at once misjudged, men with one kind seldom . . . I went on my way in the fair garden, until I gained a free view towards the sun that was sinking down soft and rosy red. The nightingales were chanting amid the flowers, high over them the larks in the clouds of even ; through all the round bosky woods the spring had taken her way, and left the mark of her footsteps on them in flower and perfume. I thought of that spirit, whom (seldom as the freely-lavished title can rightly be given) I can yet call nothing but a great man. How happy and full of joy he always was in the country among trees and flowers ! Dowered from his birth with an ardent draught of love towards all nature, like a Brahmin with the lofty Spinozism of his soul, he loved each little beast, each flower, and kept them close to his heart ; the carriage, as it passed through verdant scenes of life, was his chariot of the sun, and only under the free heaven, or under the spell of music, did his heart expand wide open and cheerful as a flower. If he was not a poet, he was something better, namely, a poem, an Indian Greek Epos, composed by some purest God. (*And again*) : Few spirits have been learned on so grand a scale as he. Most people only pursue what is most remarkable and unknown in a single science ; he, on the other hand, gathered up only the great streams, but of every department of knowledge, into his heaven-reflecting sea, that dissolved them into itself and drove its ceaseless current from the evening to the Eastern sun.

It is in this same passage that Jean Paul tells how one day Herder wished he had been born in the Middle Ages, and at another time thought it would be a comfort to see a ghost. But I will only mention one more of Richter's sayings on Herder, and it is to me the best of all. Long years after, when he was old and blind, the people with him were talking of the

¹ See a letter of July, 1801. The correspondence between the Herders and Richter is printed in Herder's *Nachlass*, vol. i.

sense of smell, and Jean Paul maintained it was a test of imagination and refined temperament. "A gentle and refined Indian," he added, "would think us all offensive animals. Herder had the most delicate sense of smell, but then in everything he was an elephant."¹ Think of the start in that circle of friends as this glorious paradox broke upon them; and then how subtly Richter was led up to it; through the delicate nose and the Asiatic form of thought, which he always attributed to Herder in spite of his Hellenism, and thus to the dreamlike Indian beast, the type of sensitive intellect. We remember, and perhaps Richter remembered, how the natives of Bückeburg used to stare at Herder as though he were an elephant; common sense then showed us how widely they were wrong, and now a flash of genius shows us how nearly they were right.²

After a few happy weeks in Weimar, Richter thought it prudent for several reasons to return to his mother in Hof. But two years afterwards (1798), coming from Leipzig, he passed through Weimar again, and, finding the temptation irresistible, he returned in October to establish himself by the side of the Herders, and stayed there for exactly two years, to the joy of the whole family. To Karoline he was a very dear friend, though they had frequent battles over his style, and she always protested that his women were too weak and whimpering.³ Her

¹ Quoted in the *Life of Jean Paul*, p. 421.

² I am the less anxious here to insist on the importance of Herder's friendship to Jean Paul because Herder was too old to be influenced much himself, and for the rest I am half-pledged to return to the subject in some future year, should wits and opportunity serve.

³ Her views on this point were so excellent, and at that time so rare, that a passage may be quoted from a letter to Knebel, October 1803: "He makes his women too weak, too whimpering—they are all poured out in tears and sentiment, instead of going to meet their pain and misfortune by action. Woman's peculiar nature is rather passive than active; and, if you bring so good and tender a soul into a still more passive state by exaggerated emotions, the poor creature must be overwhelmed in complete ruin. If I had not proofs of this, it would not give me so much pain. Richter must yet bring it about that he does not increase the soul's sorrow by sentiment, but causes it to be overcome by action."—Knebel's *Nachlass*, vol. ii. p. 348. Truly this woman had been found worthy to learn her life's lesson.

great regret was that after all his adventures he had not yet gained a wife; and, in spite of Gleim's warnings that Richter was too much an idealist to be happy with any one real woman, she of course worked her hardest to fill the deficiency. She acknowledged that the task was not easy, but even she had underrated the difficulties; for when all had at last been smoothed between Richter and Karoline von Feuchtersleben, and the whole party under the superintendence of the Herders had assembled at Ilmenau for the betrothal in May 1800, the man of genius, suddenly discovering that the lady suited him better through the post than in daily presence, honestly declared that the thing would not do, and dashed off to Berlin, where he met Karoline Meyer, whom he married within the year. In spite of their affection for Richter the Herders were naturally a little perplexed and annoyed,¹ though on the whole they defended him, and, being quite reconciled when he returned in the summer, deeply regretted his departure from Weimar that autumn. Their last real friend in Weimar was thus removed; he had been with them almost every evening for two years, and the isolation from the rest of the town had been of no consequence, for he preferred to have Herder to himself. Indeed, as time went on these two had become completely cut off from the outside currents of men. Jean Paul had been coldly received by Goethe at first, and felt himself repulsed from his nature in spite of all admiration, in spite of the eye "a ball of light," and his reading "like deep-toned thunder, blended with soft whispering rain-drops." Of "the stony Schiller, from whom as from a precipice all strangers spring back,"² he saw little, and indeed his avowed friendship to Herder, to say nothing of the magnificent lawlessness of his own genius, was enough to separate him from the whole of that party.

¹ Herder wrote what consolation he could to the unhappy girl, reminding her especially that Richter had no substance to offer her but his wits, and we remember Herder's saying that the authors of the future were likely enough to die of starvation. But the lady refused to be comforted, and both Herder and his wife were rather unreasonably indignant. "Nothing is more terrible than the perversity of women," writes our impetuous heroine.

² Letter to Otto (1796), quoted in *Life of Jean Paul*, p. 216.

But the one thing which more than any other caused this isolation was that not only in his *Clavis Fichtiana* but with all the power of his applause, criticism, and suggestion, Jean Paul aided and abetted Herder in his onslaught upon the sons of Kant.

A critical examination into this controversy on its own merits as a duel between the two rival methods of philosophy would be here quite impossible, partly because it must include an account of most of Kant's system and much of Fichte's, and would thus extend this chapter to the size of another volume or two; partly also because, if, as I believe, Herder was singularly incapable of what is called high metaphysical speculation, it is very certain that I am still less capable, and in the present state of the Kantian controversy in England it would seem a presumptuous and surely unheard-of thing for any one, who confessedly does not yet understand one side of the question, to give an opinion on it, especially in scorn. I must, therefore, content myself merely with the historical origin and importance of Herder's polemic, and pass judgment on it, if that is necessary, also by the light of history; for even those who are not metaphysicians can see what ideas have been of power in the world.

After Herder had ceased to correspond with Kant from Riga, the separation had slowly developed into hostility, probably beginning from the side of Kant, who must for a time have regarded his old pupil as a mere hot-headed enthusiast. Herder certainly took no pleasure in the *Kritik* from its first appearance, but it is hardly possible to believe the words put into the mouth of Hartknoch in the *Reminiscences*—that Kant attributed the slow diffusion of his philosophy to Herder, of all people. At first sight it seems in the last degree improbable that a man like Kant should have thought for one moment of Herder as connected with the matter at all; and yet his behaviour with regard to the *Ideen*, a year or two later, seems to point to a peculiar spite against Herder, which it is not easy to explain, unless it can be attributed to the necessary opposition between Herder's Spinozism and Kant's Freedom. This, at all events, was the beginning of avowed strife, and we have seen how Herder

attempted to answer the challenge by sneers in his *Dialogues on God*. But for many years he was restrained from saying more, partly, one may hope, from hesitation as to his grounds, partly from reverence to his old master. Not more than two years before the crisis came he wrote that famous description, by which Kant is perhaps better known than by any other, for it is quoted by most biographers.¹ But in the original manuscript he had added three or four short pages that were afterwards omitted from the *Letters for Humanity*, but are fortunately printed in the *Reminiscences*. I believe these to be of more value than the *Metakritik* and *Kalligone* put together, for they show that, at this time, Herder had some insight into the significance and permanent effect of Kant's system.

But in the next few years the aspect changed. In 1794 Fichte had begun his professorship at Jena; and there he was, just across the forest, in the midst of Herder's candidates for ordination, lecturing on Sunday, "creating God," foretelling the speedy overthrow of Christianity, and abolishing all the other sturdy old customs and traditions—for which he had all his windows broken; a most unpleasant way, as Goethe remarks, of being convinced of the Non-Ego.² It was in 1795 that the *Moniteur*, speaking of Germany as a geography-book speaks of a South Sea island, described it as a country which was chiefly famous for its philosophy, in which a Mons. Kant and his pupil, a Mons. Fichte, were the great lights.³ Even Goethe, in spite of his admiration for the man, regarded Fichte's boldness as something worse than imprudent; and it would be easy to accuse him of time-serving when, at the request of Saxony, the Duke of Weimar was obliged to take notice of his professor's doctrine, and caused his departure to Berlin (1799). In the meantime, Herder's difficulties had increased year by year. The youth of Germany were carried away by one of those recurrent fits of delirium, which give them such a charm when compared to the profit-and-loss young gentlemen of more sober countries. Some

¹ See above, p. 40.

² See Goethe's *Annals*.

³ Letter of Goethe to Schiller, May 16, 1795.

shot themselves, some wrote against marriage, some talked strange tongues, others wore strange garments, some railed against Christianity, others against their parents, most against everyday morality; but all agreed in believing the more in Kant and Fichte the less they understood them. "A new age is dawning!" cried they all; in fact, it was a real German Revolution, a period of philosophic *Sturm und Drang*, and the youth of Jena were as drunk with thought as the mob of Paris with blood.

To Herder, by reason of his position in the Church and his scheme of hope for humanity, all this came very close. The great century, for which he had done so much, seemed to be dying out in shrieks of anarchy and the incoherent ravings of madness. Even his son, his August, every one's favourite, had caught the fever, and was beginning to babble of Identity and the Absolute Ego. Therefore he determined that the time had come when he must utter his voice, though, as he says, he was now alone, without an echo; or, as Karoline more emphatically writes, "My husband has to play the parts of John the Baptist in the wilderness and of Christ at the same time." His great hope was that he might drive Kant to explain himself. It was well known that Kant repudiated much that was being developed out of his system by so-called followers, and Herder had hopes that a word from the master might divide the true from the false. His quarrel, as he often maintained, was with the Kantists rather than with Kant, but it cannot be said that his respect for the old philosopher increased with years. His general purpose is clearly seen in a passage from a letter to Knebel, in May 1799, when he had just finished the *Metakritik*:—

My object is now definite enough, namely, to expose in the shortest, clearest, and most pregnant way, the confusions and absurdities which these fellows have introduced into the criticism of all that is true and good and beautiful in art and knowledge; yes, into practical doctrines too, ethics and equity, even into philology, history, mathematics, and theology. In every journal these bull-dogs and hounds are barking and yelping out their critical canons without canon, without feeling, law, or regulation. God help me! But my motto is: *Jacta est alea*—make a clean sweep, root

and branch! I have stopped up my ears with wool and white virgin-wax; I will look neither to the left nor right till the work is done.¹

The production of the two books on Kant's philosophy exactly coincided with Richter's residence in Weimar. The *Metakritik*, which is intended as a detailed criticism on Kant's *Kritik of Pure Reason*, was begun in the autumn of 1798, and published next year. Herder borrowed the title and some of the contents from an unpublished work by Hamann, and, as Richter gave all the advice he could, and was the only one except Karoline who knew the subject of the book, the *Metakritik* may be regarded as the joint work of Hamann and his two nearest descendants. As this is so, we can only regret that it was written so late in Herder's life, and deals with a subject for which all the three were peculiarly unfitted. The *Kalligone*, which was published in 1800, is a criticism on Kant's *Kritik of Judgment*, and, being concerned with the Beautiful and kindred matters, is more attractive than the other to the simple reader, but, as far as I can understand, wanders still further from the point. Both of them abound in the cheerful and energetic abuse of those confident times. Kantism is generally known as the "Influenza from the North-East"; Fichte is a resurrection of Swift's Brother Peter, and his system is a "St. Vitus's dance," a "Bedlam of Errors," and the rest. Much was hoped from the *Metakritik*; the book sold quickly, and, as Goethe writes to Schiller, its friends expected that it would certainly reduce the oracle of Königsberg to silence. Some few applauded, but it is sad to see they are always the second-rate names, the Gleims and the Knebels. Goethe exclaimed that, if he had known what Herder was writing, he would have implored him on his knees to suppress it. And to Herder himself, as was inevitable, this, like every other polemic, only brought soreness and vexation. He was exposed to a perfect storm of ridicule and abuse in all the Kantian organs of Germany, and we may judge of the tone of these criticisms from the remarks that the seraph-tongued

¹ Knebel's *Nachlass*., vol. ii. p. 278.

Coleridge has not thought it beneath him to inscribe in his own copy of the *Kalligone*.¹ There was to have been a third volume to complete the work of the other two, but it was never written.

And indeed it was as well, for quite enough had been said. Herder had set himself in opposition to the strongest movement of his time, and such barriers only make the current wilder. His enemies, and they were many, maintained, on the whole justly, that his criticisms were chiefly verbal, dealing in etymology and the use of terms, but never going to the heart of the matter; further, that he was a mere empiric in philosophy and had no real position at all. The truth seems to be that, as I have said, Herder, for a man of such intellect, was singularly incapable of high metaphysical speculation; he did not only refuse to accept the conclusions of the Kantists, but he did not even understand what they meant; or, which is much the same thing, he could not see where the real difficulties lay.² But whether his warfare was in itself holy or unholy must be left for time and others to settle, all that concerns us here is that historically it was unholy and hopeless, one of the gravest errors of Herder's life. The main principles of Kant's philosophy have exercised such influence on the world's mind that we can hardly imagine how things looked before it. Whatever may be our views on the possibility of philosophy, no one can doubt that Kantism was one of the strongest forces of the century which produced our own, that its strength extended far into our fathers' times at least, and is therefore part of ourselves. When we consider that the words of Kant and his sons have given an unknown depth and subtlety to our greatest poets and thinkers, a radiant glow as of divine behest to the morality of our greatest teachers, a fulness and fervour to the life of hundreds of us who can pretend to neither thought nor doctrine, we must be very ignorant or very enlightened if we can afford to sneer.

But Herder with all his insight into history was blind to the

¹ See Appendix I.

² His criticism on Kant's theory of Time is a good instance of this.

strength of this new thought. He did not see that Kant was doing for philosophy very much what himself and Goethe had done for poetry and literature in earlier years; that Kantism was another protest against the common-place, against the smug philosophising of shop and parlour, against the incoherence of self-satisfied empiricism, that could not see its own difficulties, but abode in chaos and called it plain. And yet in our day it does not seem very hard to sympathise with Herder, even admitting his blindness. It has even been maintained that the *Metakritik* is an admirable example of the scientific method, and that the only objection to it is that it cannot be understood without a study of Kant, which no rational being would now-a-days undertake.¹ From Herder's position we can see how dense must have seemed the clouds of confusion that were gathering on the fair face of wisdom, threatening to stifle knowledge and impede the advancement of man. It seemed as though the ideals for which he had laboured, all that had given hope and value to life, were to be swept away by a deluge of obscure waters. And the worst of it was he had no longer the daring, which is the first thing needful for all new knowledge, all growth of mind; the loss of which is old age. Especially was he afraid that the growth of natural science would be checked or perhaps cease, most needlessly afraid, as time has shown. But the longer Herder lived the more did he limit his hopes for the coming age to the development of natural science.

It sometimes seems as though he only just missed being a man of science himself. "If I were my own master," he would often say, "I would shut myself up somewhere and for a time would study natural science and nothing else;" and when in the last years of his life he used to long to be forced to spend the rest of his days in solitary prison confinement with a few books—to this depth had the Herder of the *Sturm und Drang* descended—it is very certain that science would have been his chief pursuit. He took the keenest interest in all the scientific discoveries

¹ F. von Baerenbach, *Herder als Vorgänger Darwin's*.

of the age, listening eagerly to the wisdom of his son August, who had dwelt in many seats of learning, and above all in Freiberg, where he had heard the great Werner lecture on minerals and the formation of the earth. He met Werner himself at Aix in 1802, and was favoured with a private exposition of his theory. The son August also wrote a book on Galvanism, quite ruined, his father thought, by the under-current of Fichte; but of galvanism Herder could learn from Wilhelm Ritter, the electrician, himself. Under such influence he looked to electricity as the great secret of the future. And for another division of science there was Gall, the phrenologist, who began his lectures on the brain at Vienna in 1796, and was eagerly watched by many of the wise and foolish of Europe, by none more eagerly than Herder, who always regretted that he could not go to Vienna to meet this man. Indeed the interest was personal as well as scientific, for Gall always spoke of Herder with the highest praise and acknowledged his debt to the *Ideen*, but Herder had been dead two or three years before Gall came to Weimar and told Goethe he was a born stump-orator.

It was chiefly this keen interest in natural science which made Herder wish his birth instead of his death had fallen at the beginning of this century; he would so gladly have seen to what all this would lead. And that is the worst of being obliged to live at some particular time; every one would choose to live a few hundred years earlier, or, better still, a few thousand years later. If we must blame Herder for blindness to the significance of Kant, here at all events he is safe. He foresaw what has come to pass; he foresaw that natural science would be the key of the modern position; that after a period of struggle, more or less noisy, natural science would enjoy a period of complete triumph, gradually less and less noisy, till it was universally acknowledged and the work of science became blended with the rest. Had Herder been born when he died he might have lived to see a time when natural science is the one thing of universal interest and pursuit, the one form of knowledge that seems worth the pains; a time when the other branches of wisdom—all history,

philosophy, criticism, and theology, all except perhaps the highest poetry and the perfect forms of art—must be content to take the lower room, as seeming dull, unreal, shadowy, trifling in comparison, unable indeed to exist till they shall have re-established their foundations on the basis of natural science. This is the time that Herder foresaw, a time when it seems a nobler and more profitable thing to have analysed the laws of the impact of a drop of water than to have writ the style of gods, or compelled the nations by a single will.

Meanwhile the century was hastening to its end, and though, as Einsiedel characteristically warned Herder, there is no hard-and-fast line between century and century, yet the ordinary man finds such distinctions useful as halting-places to reflect and gather up the past. Herder was still full of schemes for future work; he was particularly anxious to finish the Hebrew poetry and the *Urkunde*, to translate the Bible, Horace, Pindar, and Ossian; as to this last, we are told in the *Reminiscences* that he had frequent conversations with James Macdonald, who stayed for a time in Weimar. If by Macdonald is meant Macpherson (who died in 1796), it would be interesting to know what were the feelings of the “impudent Scotchman” as he solemnly discussed the translation of his astonishing production with the man through whom chiefly it had worked on Germany. But all these plans of Herder’s gave way before the battle with the Kantists, and a scheme which was first suggested by the younger Hartknoch. He proposed that Herder should edit a journal, perhaps in rivalry to Schiller’s; it was to be called the *Aurora*, and Einsiedel, Knebel, and several other friends promised to assist. But whether, as Karoline tells us, Herder was overloaded by offers of contribution from both sexes, or whether he was too much occupied with Kant, after various efforts he allowed the plan to rest for two years, and only in 1801 began a series of papers under the name of *Adrastea*, written entirely by himself, and treating for the most part on episodes and detached periods of the history of the last century, such as the age of Louis XIV. and of Queen Anne, or the influence of Locke, Berkeley, and

Franklin. There is throughout a deep undertone of hostility against the two great pillars of the temple, but the series was chiefly important because it contained the first twenty-two Romances of Herder's version of the *Cid*.

He always regarded Spanish literature as an unknown garden, full of fair flowers only waiting to be gathered. Some years before we find him inquiring whether Heyne had a copy of the *Cid* in Spanish, but it seems doubtful whether Herder's acquaintance with the Spanish tongue was at all extensive. At all events, it is certain that his version of the *Cid* is almost entirely based on a French prose translation. Being twice removed from originality therefore, it cannot pretend to greatness; but the story moves pleasantly along in smooth German verse, after the same metre which Heine generally adopts in his Spanish ballads, the metre best known to English readers through Longfellow's *Hiawatha*. The Germans say it is a model of German style, nor was Herder likely to fail in this respect, especially in translation. But the fault of the whole thing is that it is too German. Herder has failed to catch the spirit of the middle ages of Spain. His *Cid* is a very worthy and excellent puppet for moral edification. But he has not much more reality and human interest than the allegories on a Georgian ceiling; an epic hero must spit out the salt-water and light his own fires before we can believe in him, and we feel that Herder's *Cid* would have been insulted if we had asked him to make a pun or to cut pork chops.¹ His Ximene, too, is a virtuous and affectionate German Frau, with all that makes her a woman and loveable left out. In a word, the presence of Herder and the eighteenth century is felt from beginning to end, and quite destroys the charm of the old story, that could never survive these bits of reflection and moralising which are as tiresome there as in Eden. But for all that, this version of the *Cid* has ranked as a great work in

¹ "If the next painter who desires to illustrate the character of Homer's Achilles would represent him cutting pork chops for Ulysses, he would enable the public to understand the Homeric ideal better than they have done for several centuries."—*Modern Painters*, vol. iii. p. 83.

Germany; chiefly, I suppose, for Herder's skilful management of the verse and style, and it is still interesting to read, if only as a contrast to Heine. It was not published in its full form till after Herder's death.

In 1801 Herder was raised to the rank of nobleman, though through no fault of his own. His son Adelbert, who had learnt to farm land, had bought a small estate in Bavaria, not only by way of business but to be a resting-place for his father in old age. The purchase was opposed by a nobleman and large landowner, to whose service Adelbert appears still to have been bound, and as there was some law—some survival of feudalism—still in force, that a commoner during the first year of purchase was obliged to sell his land at the will of a nobleman for the price he had given for it, the future looked black for the little estate. For the nobleman, whom Karoline can describe by no more fitting name than “Satan” or “a juristic hyæna,” insisted on his legal rights to the uttermost jot. In his perplexity Herder wrote to a friend, a Count Görtz of Ratisbon, to ask if Adelbert could be ennobled, or what else might be done. The Herders themselves undertook a journey into Bavaria to make inquiries, and in October they were saved from the annoyance by receiving a free diploma from the Elector of Bavaria, conferring nobility not on Adelbert but on Herder himself, and thereby on his whole family. He had, of course, no envy for such decorations; he and Karoline determined not to use the *von* themselves, but it was probably forced on them; and thus, though their darling was saved from the power of the hyæna, they were themselves exposed to much petty annoyance. The aboriginal nonentities of nobility probably viewed them with disdain as upstarts, but far worse was the contempt and aversion of the enlightened friends of liberty and equality. For people had not then learnt that titles and the like cannot rationally be either praised or blamed, being properly non-existent.

It would be of little profit to enter minutely into Herder's life during these last years, for the gloom is broken by few rays of light. His real life had indeed already ceased; a great

intellect was falling into the final dissolution ; as Jacobi said, "Herder had become like the Rhine, where it loses itself in Netherland sands." A sorely-trying and sorely-striving nature had no longer strength to trust in itself, nor courage to believe in others. "I am so dead, and all around me is so dead," he writes to Jacobi, "that the world and I myself often seem to me but a shadow and a dream." To eyes like these Weimar and Jena were weary as a pond, an unweeded garden. His pitifully sensitive mind was worn out by fruitless controversy ; Wolff, the Homeric critic, had conquered ;¹ Kant was supreme, or only superseded by worse. The ideals of his life seemed to him dead or left destitute without a champion. He was wrong, for noble ideals do not die ; it was himself that was dead.

His health, too, forsook him year by year ; the fifty years' trouble with his eye was aggravated, and he could hardly see to read. The *Adrastea* had to be printed in larger type, that he might correct the proofs. Almost every summer he was driven to this bath or that, though sometimes the family would visit the Knebels or Einsiedels in Ilmenau. In June 1801 Richter came with his young wife from Berlin, on their way to the quiet home in Meiningen, and we may take the following pleasant picture, as the last we shall get, from one of the bride's letters to her father ; it does not show much penetration, but at least says what she saw :

As soon as we arrived on Wednesday evening we went to Herder's. It was already dark. With a beating heart I stepped into the sacred house. The aged mother [Karoline, aged fifty-one, but perhaps looking more in spite of bravery] sat in the parlour alone, knitting. Richter opened the door quietly, and we stood before her. Her surprise is not to be described. She looked at me with astonishment, ran to call all the house together, turned back, and knew not what to do for joy. Now, while we debated whether Richter alone, or whether we should both go up to Herder at once, the venerable man stood in the door. I discovered him first. "There he is!" I said, with emotion. He stepped calmly near and

¹ Herder attacked Wolff's theory of Homer in Schiller's *Musen Almanac* ; chiefly at Heyne's suggestion, it seems.

turned me with penetrating eyes towards the light, and as he looked fixedly at me, "God be praised," he said, "I am now satisfied." . . . I cannot describe Herder to you; through Richter you know enough of him. He goes quietly in and out, so reflective, so serious, so harmonious, so gentle and musical his voice, his dress so patriarchal. . . . His wife has far exceeded my expectations. She has not the masculine form, but only the manly soul, that I anticipated. She has risen with her husband, but she stands firm by herself. She is equally acquainted with ancient and modern literature, speaks decidedly upon the sciences, but inclines herself in a loving, motherly manner to me. In her house she is active and busy, but without littleness. A certain well-to-do-ness rules, without luxury. The rooms are simply but cheerfully furnished. At the table everything goes on quietly, without anxiety in the hostess; the old servants are well trained, moving reverently about, observing attentively the master's wishes.¹

Truly, even to see the surface, and record that faithfully, is something. Jean Paul returned to Weimar for a time during the year after.

As Herder slowly dies, the glory of his wife's character is revealed in full magnificence. Each of her letters (and nearly all are from her now) thrills with beauty and passion like a complete poem, abounding in tenderest sorrow and great swift blows of indignation, unsparing and always true, the blows of a lioness at bay over her dying whelp, accounting all adversaries the same. Through ill-health and trial, and the wearing daily gloom of a despondent husband, she never loses hope, nor ceases to live. And yet, sometimes, she cannot hold back a sigh for the quiet happy days at Bückeburg, and for the friends that are friends no more. Of Goethe she always speaks with a passionate sorrow and an indignation that comes of regret. "O, he might have given us back to nature," she writes, "by a noble and straightforward way, if he had been willing. But he preferred his own apotheosis to truth." She has ceased to believe in him, she cries, he for ever plays the coquet, and has proved himself untrue to demonstration. But in June 1802 Herder superintended the confirmation of Goethe's son, and in Goethe's

¹ Quoted and translated in the *Life of Jean Paul*, p. 291.

words,¹ the ceremony brought touching remembrances of past relations and hopes for a renewal of intercourse in the future. Early next year, too, Goethe's play of the *Natural Daughter* was produced in the theatre, and Karoline writes :—

It filled me with a pure joy, long unknown. His good genius has awakened. It is a light of art beside which Schiller's will-o'-the-wisp vanishes. But the public and Jena students are spoilt by Schiller's clang and bombast. Schiller even said that he regretted there was too much nature in the piece !

This ray of hope soon faded, and in a few months she thus indignantly retracts her praise in two flashing sentences : “ My criticism on Goethe appears to me exactly as though the lamb there by the brook were to hold a eulogy on the *wolf* who was just going to eat it up. O, he has a *wolf's nature* ! ”² But this is anticipating, and for the cause of the outburst we must look to the next chapter. Only it seems sad that this word—almost the last of this woman's words which come into this book—should be aimed at the head, from which she had been one of the first to foretell how much was to be hoped.

¹ *Annals*, 1802.

² *Knebel's Nachlass*, vol. ii. p. 350. October 19, 1803.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“O HEAVEN, WHITHER?” 1802—1803.

“Honey, yet gall of it!
 There’s the life lying,
 And I see all of it,
 Only, I’m dying!”—PISGAH SIGHTS, 1.

“Body hides—where?
 Ferns of all feather,
 Mosses and heather,
 Yours be the care!”—PISGAH SIGHTS, 3.

AFTER rather a prolonged journey to the baths in Aix and round through Northern Bavaria to visit his son Adelbert, Herder had returned to Weimar in the autumn of 1802 with revived health and spirits. Through the winter he continued to work steadily at the *Adrastea* and his version of the *Cid*; but, in the annoyances and loneliness of Weimar, the old hag of depression soon had him in her toils. The whole world seemed dead; all the idols and guides of his youth were gone: Rousseau, Lessing, Mendelssohn, Hamann, all these had long fallen silent; and now, early in this spring of 1803, old Father Gleim went gently to sleep, and within a month was followed by the pure-souled Klopstock, towards whom Herder had lately been more closely drawn by the cord of common enmity.¹ In the spring, too, his health broke down again, for, as he and Karoline were driving back from a cultured tea-party, the coachman by trying to display his skill in rounding a corner upset them both into the road; and, though they seemed little hurt at the

¹ Klopstock wrote four letters to Herder in 1799 after the appearance of the *Metakritik*. See Herder's *Nachlass*, vol. i.

time, it appears that Herder never quite recovered the sudden surprise of the change. Very soon afterwards, in May, he had to go to Jena on business, and it is there that we see Goethe for the last time. The story is best told in Goethe's own words:¹

For three years before this I had altogether withdrawn from Herder's society, for, with his illness, his unkindly spirit of contradiction had also increased, and cast a shadow over his precious and singular powers of friendship and amiability. It was impossible to go to him without enjoying his gentleness, and impossible to come away without being offended. . . . Strangely enough, a short time before his end, I was to experience an example in little of our joys and sorrows through so many years, of our hearty agreement, as well as the incompatibility that spoilt all. After the representation of *Eugenie* (the *Natural Daughter*) Herder, as I heard from others, had expressed himself very favourably on the piece, and he was indeed the man to discriminate intention and accomplishment with the most subtle analysis. Several of my friends repeated to me the very words he had used; they were pregnant, sufficient, and to me very encouraging; I even dared to hope for a renewal of intercourse, through which the play would have found double favour in my eyes. An opportunity was very soon offered. Whilst I was in Jena he came there too on business; we lived in the castle under one roof and interchanged polite visits. One evening he happened to be in my room, and began calmly and clearly to say all that was good about the piece aforesaid. Whilst he unfolded it as a critic, he displayed hearty sympathy as a friend, and, just as a picture often charms us more when seen in a mirror than on direct inspection, so now for the first time I seemed to know this production aright and to enjoy it with true insight. This unmixed and beautiful joy, however, was not to be long granted me, for he ended by a trump-card, good-humouredly played it is true, but singularly inopportune; and by this the effect of all the rest, at all events for the moment, was undone. A man of insight will understand the possibility of this, but will also sympathise with the painful feeling that seized me; I looked at him, answered nothing, and in this symbol the many years of our intercourse came up before me in a startling and terrible guise. Thus we parted, and I never saw him again.

When we think of that meeting on the steps of the Strassburg inn more than thirty years before, and the results for Goethe to which that meeting had led—when we remember

¹ *Annals* 1803, end.

what these two men had been to each other—it seems a little paltry that a harsh and perhaps thoughtless criticism on a rather inferior bit of work should have checked the last chance of reconciliation before the final peace. But that is the sadly human way.

On returning to Weimar Herder was seized by his old maladies of bilious fever and nervous affection, but was now carefully tended by his eldest son Gottfried, the doctor. Karoline in vain urged him to go quite away and rest for at least a year; he always replied that he was too busy. In July, however, he started for the wells at Eger, handing to Karoline, from the carriage as he went, his version of the *Cid*, completely written out. On his way to Eger he stayed with his son August, the geologist, for a fortnight near the Schneeberg, which I suppose to be the same as the lofty hill of that name seen by the enthusiastic tourist from the cliffs of Saxon Switzerland far away to the south and west—just in the Bohemian country. Here, amidst the silence of the woods, and all the soothing sights and delicate scents of the country, life seemed to be quite restored. He finished the little dramatic poem called the *House of Admetus*, based on the eternal story of Alcestis and her love; and “Herder’s rest,” the place where he used to sit and think or converse with August through the sunny afternoons, is, perhaps, still shown to the traveller who has ventured so far from a railway. At Eger he lived in quiet and contented loneliness, and we can imagine his trim little figure in the “patriarchal” garb serenely wandering up and down to the tap-room and the parade, probably giving quite as much food for mirth and gentle satire to the Polish notabilities and other lavish frequenters of the wells as they gave to him. For the consolation of all who are cursed with this world’s goods, one of his remarks in a letter home must be quoted: “What a difference there is between the manner of life of the rich and—I might almost say—the reasonable of men; yet, even amongst the rich, some are reasonable—that is, after their own fashion.”

On his way home he visited Dresden for the first time in

his life. He was received by all the people, from the men of genius and learning down to the Elector himself, with much enthusiasm and friendly courtesy. All the treasures of art, the pictures, and jewels, and libraries, were laid open before him, the keepers vying with each other to do him honour and to write him complimentary verses. Dresden seemed like a new life; it was, in fact, the last beam of the sunset flashing across the world.

He returned to Weimar in the middle of September, and found his sons Gottfried, Emil, and Wilhelm, besides the only daughter Luise, all at home. He was full of plans for the coming winter, especially practical schemes for the improvement of the Weimar schools; he also intended to finish the *Hebrew Poetry*, the *Adrastea*, and much else. Especially since the inspiration of Dresden his cry had been for "more time, more time"; but no more time was to be given him. For exactly a month after his return he continued his ordinary duties, and he was in the midst of a chapter of the *Adrastea* when he was taken ill for the last time. The page which he had been writing remained open on his desk to the end.

He is said to have been attacked by a complication of all his former disorders. At first he remained cheerful, and his time was spent in reading, or listening to the reading of others, or to music; but, as his nervousness increased, he could not bear sounds. For a time he did not think that he should die, and he certainly had no wish for death. "O, my friend, my dear friend," he would cry to Gottfried, "save me if you can." And again, "Only my body is ill; if I could get up I would do a lot of work." Yes, and there was so much to be done yet, so much that he thought could be left to no one else. He was only fifty-nine, and how differently we should have thought of Goethe if he had died in 1808.

But there is another saying of Herder's which partly contradicts these and seems to come nearer the truth; for he would repeat, "Ah, if only one new and great spiritual idea came to me, to penetrate and quicken my soul, I should recover at

once." And I believe this would have been so; I believe he was really killed by disappointment, loneliness, and sheer intellectual exhaustion. His work was done; he had striven hard all his life to live in the good, the beautiful, and the complete, without flinching; but, even if death had not come now, it seems that he could have accomplished little more for the world.

On Sunday morning, the eighteenth of December, 1803, he fell asleep, and had not strength to wake again.

"A man of free intellect thinks of nothing so little as of death, and his wisdom is not a meditation of death but is a meditation of life."¹

On the third day Herder was buried in his own church, a vast concourse looking silently on. His tombstone is marked by the device of his favourite signet-ring, or seal—the serpent of eternity, and the words "Life, Love, and Light."

And Karoline had to live through all this, and to live through the far worse trial—the burial in the press and the critical journals, a ceremony which has gradually become so grim that our apprehension of it almost overpowers sorrow for the death of a great man. Most of their friends found solace for their grief by composing elegies on the deceased, but, to tell truth, Weimar was a good deal fluttered that month by the whirlwind of Madame de Stäel's arrival. The critics, we may imagine, summed Herder up and polished him off in the usual style; some were kindly, others so spiteful that the indignant widow could only compare their hearts to cavities of stone, the chosen haunt of toads. For the rest nothing remained to her now but to devote the years that were to come to her husband's memory. She received a pension and certain other favours from the Grand Duke; the sale of Herder's books almost covered the debt of the household (about five or six hundred pounds); and she seems to have divided her time between Jena, Schneeberg, Freiberg, and Weimar. She diligently collected materials for Herder's Life, and gave advice to the joint editors of his works. In 1807 she

¹ Spinoza, *Ethics*, part iv. prop. 67.

finished the *Reminiscences*, which with all its shortcomings must always be the basis of an account of his life; but, owing partly to her self-restraint, and partly to the careful editing of Georg Müller, the *Reminiscences* by themselves would give us a very inadequate idea of this woman's truly beautiful nature, with all her enthusiasms and superstitions and bursts of indignant zeal.

She died on the 15th of September, 1809.

When Herder died a thousand new and stirring notes were beginning to chant the promise of another age. Of the Schlegels he heard a good deal, but without sympathy; Brentano is mentioned in the letters as a hysterical boy; with Tieck he perhaps conversed. But this next great movement was not yet a distinct and separate force. Wordsworth and Coleridge though at their height were unnoticed or despised, for most people are asleep when old night is rent by the first dubious warble of a bird. Rückert was only fourteen; Wilhelm Müller not yet ten. To Byron and Shelley Herder's ears were for ever stopped by death. The Heroic Symphony was hardly begun; Carlyle was in his boyhood; Heine could just walk with tolerable security; Emerson was still learning space at the caprice of a nursemaid; the fathers of Darwin and Wagner, of Schumann and Browning, had as yet no imagining of their purpose in life. Herder cannot be called one with any of these, but he helped to make them possible; he was one of their fathers in thought, and their sons and grandsons are still with us. Thus we are knit together in the woof of time, and no single thread however colourless can be spared, still less one of the subtle motives in the pattern.

But there is a closer bond even than the bond of time. If we have been able to catch a glimpse of the phantoms that have flitted across this book—if we have laughed with their follies, and seen that their weakness is also ours—it is very certain that the own true self of each, though it appear but once in a lifetime, is one with us in a far higher sense. We cannot mistake it, and we dare not reject it. Every true word or action which springs straight from a man's highest nature, that is, his real nature, will be infallibly and universally true for all of us; it becomes part

of the mental autobiography of each ; it is one with ourselves, but, like ourselves, it is also a creation, and a whole lifetime will not exhaust its significance. Therefore it is impossible for any one who will open his eyes to be alone at any time. Close at his door, and far out through time and distance, he will find that he is compassed about by a great cloud of witnesses, full of his joys, his hopes, his questionings, and full of his sorrows. For the heart knoweth another's bitterness, and herein consists the whole beauty of man.

APPENDIX I.

IN copying out the following notes which Coleridge has written on the margin of three of his own books, I have given his exact words—so far as they are legible, and merely added short explanations from the context, where such appeared to me necessary.

I begin with his remarks on the *Letters dealing with the Study of Theology* (2nd edition, 1790).

At the very beginning Herder insists on his old point that the interpretation of the Bible must be human, by which he meant what we should call critical, as opposed to the blind dogmatism of priests. Whereupon, Coleridge exclaims on the fly-leaf:—

A famous word, a serviceable (?) and accommodating word, is that *menschlich* (human, or rather human-natural). It is the cousin-german of Charity, and employed by Herder to cover as many follies (according to himself, not to me) as the latter does sins. See the first page of the first letter—*Menschlich, ad infinitum*. How can man reason otherwise? Can he reason *göttlich*? If he can, ought he not? If he cannot, Herder can only mean that there are *zwei mögliche Weisen der Menschlich-denken* (two possible ways of human thought). How can we [illeg.] determine the better of these two, till they are contra-distinguished? *Kindisch* (childish) is what Herder should have said, and this is the true dispute, whether the Bible is capable of being interpreted as we would interpret Plato, Kant, Leibnitz, or only as *Esop's Fables* for children?

As note for page 17 we find:—

How can Herder have had the effrontery to assert that there is no tone of *allegory* in the Tree of *Life*, and the Tree of the Knowledge of

Good and Evil—and a talking serpent, &c.? If these do not possess all the marks of Eastern allegory, of allegory indeed *in genere*, what does? and why should not Moses introduce historical persons in an allegory as well as the author of the Book of Job? History was for instruction—no such cold divisions then existed as *matter of fact* chronicles and genial gleanings of the Past, such as those of Herodotus.

For pages 21, 22, where Herder has described the Temptation and Fall, we read—still on the fly-leaf:—

I scarcely know whether I am reading intentional blasphemies or mere follies. Is this Herder's Lord God Eternal and Infinite? What was the fruit-caused Lust? Wherein could it have differed from what Adam (according to Herder) had seen and envied in the brutes? Why were they ashamed of this more than hunger?

On page 1 Herder had said the Bible is a book written by men for men, and so on. Coleridge has as note:—

In other words the Bible or Word of God is not the word of God. Truth is Truth, Falsehood is Falsehood. The only medium is Fable, but this is *kindisch* not *menschlich*.—S.T.C.

On page 15 Herder says the poetry of the Bible is the natural outpouring of the spirit, free from all art and rule, and therefore not to be compared with regular poetry. Note:—

This the Psalms themselves contradict. Doubtless the Hebrews had poetry, intentional poetry; for such art is the first step of progressive nature.

On page 19:—

And thus, according to this demi-semi-quavering Philosoph-Christian, Adam, in a state of perfection, acquired his first notion of Love from he-goats and ram-cats in their orgasms.

On the fly-leaf at the beginning of the second series Coleridge has these remarks:—

N.B.—To observe in any great work on the painfulness of being oblige(d) to speak contemptuously of *truths* when taken as subordinated parts of a whole, but absurdities when assumed as forming the whole—Socinianism, &c.—yet what offence and scandal to the feelings of weak

minds if King of England, Scotland, and Berwick upon Tweed—what if a man should declare George the III^d. to be king only of Berwick upon Tweed? If I show the absurdities of this taken as a *whole*, do I deny that he is King of Berwick, together with England, Scotland, Ireland, and—[word illegible—perhaps Wales—or is it France?]

In part ii. letter B. p. 214 :—

All this runs glib as cream, but, most noble Herder! was not this Gospel writ by Matthew, and was not Matthew an Eye-witness? And is it natural for a plain man who had seen three miracles at three different times under different circumstances to confound them into one? And this too when after-events had unspeakably elevated the importance of the *Wirken* (?) (power or result) of these miracles? Surely far more natural were it for such a man to multiply miracles.—S.T.C.

On page 216 :—

Cream! or at least charcoal so exquisitely levigated that it *tastes* to the palate smooth as cream! But alas! what story by what fanatic might not be so supported? Heaven forbid that the Gospels should need such defence. Alas! might not some sturdy infidel reply—The four Evangelists do indeed agree *in the main*, just as in common life we find a number of men all agreeing and disagreeing in a story which all had heard cursorily, but no one had seen?

On page 218 Herder had been arguing, in rather a wild way, that we must receive all of the Gospels as true, or none :—

Now apply this to Wesley's Journal, or twenty other books of the same kind, especially *The Lives of Roman Catholic Saints*. What! are there no rules of discrimination? Am I to disbelieve all that Quintus Curtius relates of Alexander because some parts contradict themselves, and other parts contradict common sense? The tract alluded to [*The Lives of the Saints*, apparently] might be easily rendered as ridiculous to a sound understanding as it is hateful to a good heart without this undermining of all wholesome criticism.

On page 220 Herder had been arguing that probability and improbability are hardly ever a test of truth, and that the miracles should be deduced from the very nature of Christ, rather than the nature of Christ from the miracles. It certainly seems unfortunate, that in the following note Coleridge should have so far mistaken his meaning as triumphantly to answer him by the very same argument :—

O ! Kant has answered this in a way that no *Metakritik* of no Herder will effectually rejoin to ! After sixteen years' meditation I dare affirm that no miracle is susceptible of full proof unless it derive the greater part of its evidence *a priori*, *i.e.* unless the religion prove it even more than it proves the religion. On this ground I believe that Christ wrought miracles.

On page 225 :—

Yet still this treachery of Judas. It was the first scruple that *my own thought* elaborated in my earliest manhood. And the only answer to it (*viz.*), that miracles were not to the Jews *all* that they are to us—that they perpetually confounded not only the marvellous with the miraculous but the unusual with the marvellous—what a thick-set hedge of difficulties for the Paleys and—[name too illegible for my ignorance to guess at].

On page 227 :—

Who could fancy that this same Herder had written *Ueber die Auferstehung* [On the Resurrection], the result of which is evidently to explain away all the miracle of this little, simple, honest History !

On page 230 :—

Merciful Heavens ! And is a tale how a man that was thought dead on Friday night and appeared alive again on Sunday morning [word cut off], that certainty (—) the immutability (?) (—) all (—) men (—) which the human soul thirsts after ? And is it fact that the history of Christ was the chief means of establishing Christianity ! Do not the Scriptures themselves attribute it to the Holy Ghost, to a Supernatural Influence, to a gift of faith, to the hearts that sincerely yearned after it ? I believe (?) Lörd help my unbelief ! [rest illegible].

On page 231 Herder insists on the importance of fact rather than doctrine. Note :—

In *my* experience at least this too is false. The best and warmest Christians of the lower and middle classes dwell almost exclusively on the dogmatic *fides*—namely Grace and Redemption.

On page 232 Herder was saying that the references to facts of sacred history in hymns and the like were of more edification than direct doctrines. Note :—

I doubt it not; but then these references to facts were only mementoes of the sublime mysteries of which they were the *symbols* rather than the evidences, though doubtless both.

Coleridge does not appear to have read the rest of the book, and it is not hard to understand why.

In Herder's treatise *On the Resurrection as Faith, History, and Doctrine*, Coleridge has the following remarks:—

On page 1 Herder says many nations are still content to believe they are dust, and to dust shall return. Note:—

False. At least Herder should have stated some three or four of these *wie viele Nationen!* The contrary is notoriously the fact.

On page 7 Coleridge finds a contradiction in Herder's account of the ascent of Enoch and Elijah, but the important words are to me illegible, and the note therefore is not worth insertion.

Same page, Herder maintains that the Hebrews did not believe in a Resurrection, because they said they were "gathered to their fathers." Note:—

Does not this very phrase, "gathered to the dwelling of their fathers," prove their belief in some form or other of future Being? Undoubtedly it does; and their great anxiety about the place of their sepulchre is inexplicable on any other grounds.

On page 9:—

How could Herder explain the singular fact of a death-realm without an Elysium among the Jews, if not from some revelation concerning the *spiritual* death till the coming of the Redeemer?

On page 24 Herder had been saying that belief in the Resurrection was most likely to arise in times of national calamity and distress, as in the time of the Maccabees. Note:—

What vile trash! That such a faith as that portrayed in the Maccabees should have been the sudden growth of a day! Is there a word implying that it was a new faith? Is it not, on the contrary, declared in the Book of Wisdom that none but the most hardened and cruel sensualists dis-

believed a future state? And even in the Prophets, how much more natural to suppose that what they took for granted concerning each Individual they should apply metaphorically to the *State*, and its fortunes than that what was only metaphorical as to the State should be applied in solemn and literal reality to the Individual? Besides, had this been the case, the Jews would have appropriated the Resurrection to themselves, and not have extended it at once to the whole human race.

On page 26, at the end of the chapter on the history of the growth of the belief in Resurrection :—

So God sent his own Son from Heaven in order that the fictions of hypocrites and the phantasies of dreamers might be fulfilled—O, blasphemy!

On page 39 Herder had maintained that the account of the Resurrection was by the same hand as the account of the Crucifixion, was as simple and circumstantial, and must be accepted in the same manner. Whereupon he is thus completely answered by Coleridge :—

Curious hope! So if a biographer of Wesley, after a minute account of his death, should add a story of his apparition as seen by several of his followers, the latter is to be as trustworthy as the former, as being written by the same man!

On page 40 Herder maintains that it was not the Divine Purpose of Christ to deliver Himself again into the power of man, or to expose Himself to danger when once the Crucifixion was over. Note :—

And he could have commanded ten legions (60,000) of angels, and could pass through closed doors!

On page 41 :—

An infidel would ask where Jesus procured the gardener's dress, or whatever it was, in which Mary saw him. It is plain, he would say, that Jesus must have had friends and confederates unknown to or unnoticed (?) by the Apostles.

On page 44. I can see nothing in Herder's words to account for Coleridge's indignation. He says that before the Crucifixion the disciples had looked for an earthly kingdom, but after the

Resurrection they understood the meaning of the spiritual kingdom; this, I believe, is still the generally accepted view. Note:—

Are we to understand from this arch-Jesuit that Christ's former declarations were all delusions? Verily, broad, strait-forward (*sic*) disbelief is religion and Christianity compared with this assassin-like stab at the character of our Lord.

At the end of the fifth part Coleridge has written:—

A strange inconsistency does this appear to me. We are to found our trust in a future state on a *history*: and yet, according to Herder, a history so disguised in symbols, allusions, and short and long allegories, that of the two main facts which give their value to all the others, Herder believes in the literal sense neither the one nor the other, and does not supply even a hint what we are to believe, *i.e.* historically, instead of it. If we are to understand anything, Christ nor really died on the cross nor really ascended to heaven. What then became of him? Or if it be replied we neither know nor care biographically, then how can your faith be founded on a history?

At the end of the sixth part Coleridge has written as follows:—

Well! this is indeed a lullaby lie! Eia Puleia, Kindehen, geschweige.¹ 1. First, it is utterly false that the resurrection of Christ as a mere proof of a future state and of retribution ever did produce the effects of Christianity, either of belief or of persecution. Good Heavens! who, except perhaps Jews, would ever have persecuted innocent men for helping out their belief in rewards and punishments after this life by an account of an apparition distinguished from the common sort by being tangible? 2. Still more false is it that the Apostles teach different dogmata. 3. And falser still that they distinguished their dogmata from their *κήρυγμα* (preaching or message). But falsest of all that they subordinated articles of faith to acquiescence in historic facts. St. Paul would no longer know Christ himself after the flesh, *i.e.* in mere reference to historic phenomena. In short, the one great continuous fact of 1800 years has demonstrated that such opinions as these of Herder's were never held, and never could hold together any promiscuous congregation.

On page 109 Herder had been saying that the conclusions

¹ "Hush-a-bye, baby, on the tree-top," as our English mothers say. *Popeia* is, I believe, commoner than *Puleia*.

of the human understanding were the important things, but these were confirmed by such events as the taking up of Enoch and Elijah, and the return of Christ to life. Note:—

And why not of all the others collected in [name illegible to me], Zwinglii, *Theat. Hum. Vit.*, and the Humane Society? And is this the religion, this the name to which heaven and earth is to bow and hell to tremble? A religion founded on as gross a calumny of the human soul, which nowhere but in monstrous exceptions has doubted its own amenability and perpetuity, as it is an affected *vornehm* ["quality-like," to use Coleridge's own translation], perversion of God's Holy Word.

On page 113 Herder maintains that there has been in mankind an invincible belief that the right or wrong which escapes reward or punishment in this life will be required hereafter. Note:—

Most true! a complete confutation of nine-tenths of this semi-demi-quavering book.

On page 117:—

Merciful Saviour! and this is to pass for a defence of, no, an apology, a mendicant, canting excuse for, this everlasting Gospel! We must read Peter and John as we read a novel and compare it with the fable of Admetus!

On the same page Herder speaks of the disciples' trust in the word "of their departed friend." The German *Freund* has rather a different and deeper shade of meaning than our word: a woman will use it to her lover. Note:—

What one of the New Testament writers ever presumed to use this familiar language, or any answering to it, in any other sense than they used it of Almighty God—Lord and Saviour—God blessed over all—God incarnate—the substantial and adequate Idea of the Father?

On page 119 there is an unimportant note on the *command* implied in the sixth chapter of St. John.

On page 122 Herder had been insisting, like Professor Westcott, on the all-importance of the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ for the religion of Christianity, as commonly understood at the time. Note:—

Not in the least would it explain the writings of Paul and John! Did they or any of the Jews ever pray to Enoch or Elijah, or declare them the creator of the world? Did they join their names industriously with God the Father? What should we think of God and Enoch and God acting? For so the Herderists interpret the Holy Ghost.

On page 124:—

Besides, turn back to p. 39, lines 12-17 (as the story of the death of the Crucified is worthy of belief, so too under such circumstances must the story of the Resurrection be; for it rests on the faith of the same historian), and then ask: Are the Resurrection and Ascension the only wonders related by these historians in the character of eye-witnesses? Or only the conclusion of a long series? Does not the same John solemnly attest the resurrection of the already putrid Lazarus, and the twice feeding of three or four thousand men with a few loaves and small fishes?

On page 125 Coleridge's indignation seems again unfounded. Herder maintains that Christ actually died and awoke from death, and that the disputings of the early sects as to the nature of his death were mere dissertations, and unimportant provided the facts are admitted. Note:—

This is too, too bad! What? Is it of no consequence whether Christ's resurrection were a miracle or an accident? If the latter, must not all his predictions have been forgeries?

On page 126:—

All this trash might have been silenced by one question. Whatever Christ's state was when taken from the cross, real death is only suspended animation; was it brought back again by such means as he foreknew, could and did foretell?

On the last page (132) Herder says that the truth of the Resurrection and the doctrine of Christianity could not be built on the mere fact of the visible Ascension. Note:—

Impudent sophistry! When it is clear that in Herder's system the whole burthen of the proof that Christ really died and rose again from death to life rests in the visible ascension.

On the fly-leaf at the end are the following general remarks:—

It is hard under one name to designate Herder's Faith, "if Faith it can be called, which Faith is none." It is or seems to be composed of

contrary elements in the act of balancing each other, but not yet balanced and thus substantial, but still glowing in restless vibrations. A sensibility, a certain refined epicurism of moral sense, a desire to possess the sympathies of the mass of Christians, and to govern them thereby, and yet an equal desire to be respected by the Philosophers, the *Intellectuality*. He will linger in and about the court of the religious, but then he will have, or will forge for himself, a ticket, a certificate from the philosophers, authorising him so to do. Alas! but is not this very like a *spy*? The most amusing thing in all Herder's theological tracts is the cool, (*vornehm*) "quality-like" looking down upon all the founders of Christianity. Poor simple creatures! excuse them, gentlemen, they had very good hearts, and though they were somewhat silly, yet, really put ourselves in their place, suppose that instead of our rank, education, and various immeasurable superiority, we had been vulgar, ignorant Jew-blackguards like Peter, John, &c. we should have thought and acted much the same! And this is a defence of Christianity!!!

And finally, best of all, on the next fly-leaf:—

What is the great nostrum of Unitarianism? To persuade (an easy task) wealthy, half-educated tradesmen and youths in the first processes of thinking that their ignorance is sound sense. Consequently, those natural doubts, which meeting with the presumptuousness incident to youth and prosperity, which can only be counteracted by docility and reverence of the great men departed, are ripened at once into insolent *positiveness*.¹ To such men infidelity is a comparative blessing—even as much as the giving up a quack medium to a sick man, even though he should not yet have called in a regular physician—he is more likely to do so.

On two blank leaves in the middle of his copy of the *Kalligone* (first edition, 1800) Coleridge has written as follows:—

Dec. 19, 1804. Malta. And thus the book impressed me, to wit, as being rank abuse, drunken self-conceit, that kicking and sprawling in the six-inch deep gutter of muddy philosophism from the drainings of a hundred sculleries dreams that he is swimming in an ocean of the translucent and profound; for I never read a more disgusting work, scarcely so disgusting an one, except the *Metakritik* of the same author. I always, even in the perusal of his better works, the *Veim. Blätter* [Miscellanies], the *Briefe das Studium des Theol. betreffend* [Letters on the Study of Theology], and the *Ideen zur Geschichte des Mensch.* [Ideas for the History of

¹ Coleridge has forgotten his construction, but the sense is clear.

the Human Race], thought him a painted mist with no sharp outline, but this is a mere steam . . .¹

On the next page he continues, also with a Swiftian metaphor:—

If ever there was a = first syllable of the Latin for Thrush in a band-box, or meanness in millanery musky [word illegible], it is realised in this diatribe of Herder's!! It disturbs my patience to see a man transform the thoughts of a profound philosopher into poetic whip-syllabub; and then by affixing a different meaning to the same words give himself the air of confutation and insult. *Vide* p. 14 [in part II.] *et passim*. So important is Kant's distinction that one of the surest characteristics of Genius as compared with Talent rests upon it. *Ex. gr.* Alston (?) and Jack Dawe are both employed, each on a picture. The latter constantly meditates on the arbitrary consequence of his *Handlung* or business—the 300*l.* promised. The former cannot work at all, except as far as he removes this from his mind, and finds the end in the means, and true delight in the very labour.

¹ The rest is legible but too Swiftian for our day, and it is a pity Coleridge should have spoilt the magnificence of the beginning by stooping to such an end.

APPENDIX II.

The following Dream by Jean Paul was found amongst Herder's papers;¹ it was much altered by the author, and published in *Siebenkäs* under the name of "The Address of the Dead Christ."² Readers of Carlyle's earlier Essays will here recognise some of his quotations from Richter in their earliest form. This dream must have been written in 1789 or 1790, according to Düntzer.

*Lament of the dead Shakespeare among the dead congregation
in church because there is no God.*

I often heard in my childhood that at eleven o'clock at night, whilst we were all sunk in deep sleep, the dead rise from their sleep and go through a mock performance of the divine worship of the living in the church; for this reason I did not care to look late at night at the long church windows and the moonlight playing over them. I will now relate my dream: I give much heed to dreams: it seems as though from dreams we look out to far-off cloud-covered shores—as though they bore us away from the crash and roar at the foot of a waterfall to a calm still height, where we can look into the stream of life that flows silently through the plain, and into the heaven that is over it and is reflected on its surface.

I dreamt I awoke in God's acre. I heard the wheels of the church-clock unrolling as they struck eleven, and I looked for the sun into the empty heaven of night, and thought it was merely veiled from me by an eclipse. The graves stood open and the iron doors of the charnel; over the walls flitted shadows which no one made, and other shadows walked upright in mere air. At times a flickering glimmer danced up the church-windows from within, and two tremulous unceasing discords struggled

¹ Printed at the end of Herder's correspondence with Jean Paul. *Nachlass*, vol. i. p. 349.

² *Siebenkäs*, end of vol. ii.

with one another in the church, and vainly strove to pass away into a single concord. I found I had passed unconsciously into the church, in which, up at the back of the altar, a solitary hollow voice was tremulously sounding. I saw unknown forms, marked by the stamp of centuries long gone by, quaking and trembling: those further off trembled more violently and faded into colourless shades; and behind the altar was a quivering darkness, into which the shadows melted away—the crowd of the dead was continually drawn towards the darkness, and the darkness ate them up. In the uncovered coffins lay sleeping dead with faces full of living dreams, and now and again they smiled; but those who had awaked smiled not. Many who were awake turned towards me and heavily opened their eyes; but inside there was no eye, and in the left breast instead of a heart was a hole. These also, with tortured and weary gestures, kept clutching at something in the air, and their arms grew longer, broke off, and dropped asunder. On the ceiling of the church was the dial of eternity, on which there was no number and no hand, but it whirled around itself; and yet a black finger was pointing to it, and the dead tried to make out the time on its face. I was drawn nearer to the awful voice by the altar, which issued from a noble form, almost like Shakespeare's; but no movement told me that it spoke. It spoke thus:

“Resound for ever, ye two discords! God is not, neither is Time. Eternity is chewing the cud of itself and is gnawing at Chaos. The many-coloured rainbow of existence stands like an arch, with no help of sun, over the abyss, and is dropping down into it—we stand to witness the dumb midnight-burial of suicide nature, and we shall ourselves be buried in her grave. Who now looks up to a divine eye of nature? With an empty black immeasurable *eye-socket* she stares you in the face. Ah! in this eternal storm, which no power sways, all beings, each and all, stand there like crippled orphans, and as far as existence throws its shadow there is no father. Whither art thou whirling, O sun, with thy earths? On thy long way thou shalt find no God, and perhaps on *one* earth a God of fond imagining. . . . O, we unhappy dead! when we lay down in the coffins our galled and jaded backs, burdened with the weight of life, and in life's evening creep into our earth, sleepy and stooping, with the sure and certain hope that on the morrow we shall see God and his heaven; then at midnight we are forced, with wrenchings and shocks, out of the sleep of death and the ashes of the dead, by the storm and combat and glare of the chaos of nature; and the morrow never comes. . . . O, thou who yet livest! when a man is dead close his eyes no more, for the eyelids rot away and then he sees; and sees no God any more. . . . O, ye blessed living ones! perhaps to-day, amidst the purple of evening and the breath of flowers, you fall down and gaze into the open heavens far above the fixed stars, and go like children,

with every treasure, every pain, to your father and stand speechless in prayer. O, give us your God ! I, too, was as happy as you in the days that have flitted past, when I could still rest my aching bosom on thee, O thou impossible God ! when I still believed that I lived in thy arms, under thine eyes, and on thy world, and at last fell prostrate in tears of thankfulness, thou departed father, who hast melted away sooner than my tears ! Therefore do the sleeping dead still smile, their dreams reflect the world of the past, and their heart still prays once more as it falls into dust. O, pray to him—to this beloved God, and cease not, before, with your dream and your form, he vanish like a shade !

“I hear only myself, and behind me is annihilation. In this broad sepulchre of nature everything is alone as nothingness ; and by this primeval hurricane, which seethes and yawns over chaos, is every being borne along in loneliness or in loneliness engulfed. But to what end are we yet borne ? To what end does anything endure ? What, except chance, in its turn keeps chance in check that it does not tread out the spark of the sun and stride through the snow-drift of stars and blow out sun after sun, just as before the hastening traveller dewdrop after dewdrop vanishes with a flash ? And thou, poor juggling man—whose life is the sigh of nature or the echo of that sigh—whose ashes are the visible scrapings off a mirror that feigned a living man and made him—whose existence is a concave mirror, that cast a tottering cloudy image in the air ; gaze now into the abyss over which the ash-clouds of the overwhelmed are drifting, and think still, as thou art crumbling into dust, ‘I am !’ And still dream of thy heart as it falls asunder, ‘It loved.’ Do you not see then, ye dead, the little heap of ashes that rest so still on the altar—I mean the mouldering dust of Jesus Christ. . . .”

With a terrible blow the bell-hammer, that spread over us into all space, seemed to strike twelve, and crushed the church and the dead : and I awoke and was glad that I could pray to God. But *his* sun looked redder through the flowers, and the moon rose over the eastern evening glow, and all nature resounded with a note of peace, like a far-off evening bell.—By the author of *Selections from the Devil's Papers*.

FINIS.

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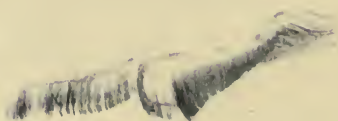
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